

**Settling In? A Case Study of Somali Refugees Living in
Stockholm, Sweden.**

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ABSTRACT

This is a Case Study of Somalian refugees living in Stockholm, Sweden. The study is based on interviews conducted with twenty-eight Somalis, ten Swedish officials and a focus group interview involving eight other Somalis. The thesis examines respondents' views about their experiences and perceptions relating to the 'integration' of Somalis into Swedish society. The study explores how Somali refugees in Sweden orientate themselves to the prevailing Swedish system of integration. It also aims to identify some of the key factors that impinge upon their (Somalis) socioeconomic and cultural integration into Swedish society. The study reveals that there are a number of 'integrative dilemmas' confronting Somali refugees in Sweden. These include widespread unemployment; 'unsuitable' education; residential segregation; and, institutional discrimination – notably, in the labour market and housing sectors. The study links the inability of Somalis to 'settle in' within Swedish society to their 'divergence' from the prevailing 'norms', particularly in relation to 'culture' and 'religion'. These 'differences' reflect the intensity that Somalis attach to family bonds, patriarchal gender role/patterns and their adherence to Islam (the religion most Somalis adhere to). Although there have been a number of investigations concerning immigrant integration in Sweden, this is one of the few detailed in-depth qualitative studies on Somali refugees in Sweden. This research concludes with a number of recommendations and suggestions which may assist with the smooth transition of Somalis refugees into Swedish society.

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List of Acronyms

AKassa	<i>Arbetslöskassa</i> (Unemployment Insurance Benefit)
ABC Område	‘ABC’ Area [<i>Arbete</i> (work), <i>Bostad</i> (housing/accommodation), <i>Centrum</i> (centre/‘square’)]
ABF	<i>Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund</i> (The Workers’ Education Association).
ALMP(s)	Active Labour Market Programmes
AMS	<i>Arbetsmarknadsstyrelse</i> (Swedish Labour Market Board)
BSA	British Sociological Association
CBS	Central Business Districts
DN	<i>Dagens Nyheter</i> (The Daily News)
DO	<i>Diskrimineringsombudsman</i> (Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination)
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EU	European Union
EUMC	European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia
FB	<i>Familje Bostäder</i> (‘Family Housing’ Corporation)
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation (also referred as to as ‘female genital cutting’)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GP	<i>Göteborg Posten</i> (The Gothenburg Post)
GRUNDVUX	<i>Grundläggande Vuxenskola</i> (Basic adult education for beginners)
HO	<i>Handikapsombudsman</i> (Disability Ombudsman)
HomO	<i>Ombudsmannen mot diskriminering på grund av sexuell läggning</i> (Discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation)
HSB	<i>Hyresgästernas Sparkasse - och Byggnadsförening</i> (The Savings and Construction Association of the Tenants)

ILO	International Labour Organisation
IT	Information technology
JämO	<i>Ombudsmannen mot Etnisk Diskriminering</i> (Equal Opportunities Ombudsman).
JP	<i>Jylland-Posten</i> (Danish newspaper based in Århus, Denmark)
KOMVUX	<i>Kommunala Vuxenutbildning</i> (Municipally-run adult education schools)
NA	<i>Nerikes Allehanda</i> (Swedish newspaper based in Örebro, Sweden)
N.D	Not Dated
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for European Cooperation and Development
PUT	<i>Permanent upphållstillstånd</i> (Permanent residence permit)
SB	<i>Svenska Bostäder</i> ('Swedish Housing' Corporation)
SCB	<i>Statistiska Centralbyrån</i> (Statistics Sweden)
SDF	<i>Stadsdelsförvaltning</i> (Local Social (Administrative) District)
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SFS	<i>Svensk Författningssamlingar</i> (Swedish Constitutional Documents)
SFI	<i>Svenska för invandrare</i> (Swedish language instruction for immigrants)
SIO	Swedish Integration Office (<i>Integrationsverket</i>)
SIV	<i>Statens Invandrarverk</i> (Swedish Migration Board)
SOL	<i>Socialtjänstlagen</i> (Social Services Act)
SOU	<i>Staten Offentliga Utredningar</i> (Official Government [Inquiry] Commission)
SRA	Social Research Association
SVT1	Swedish Television One
TV4	Swedish Channel 4
UNCERD	United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

UNHCR	United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees
USK	<i>Utredning och Statistikkontoret</i> (Stockholm Office of Research and Statistics)
VHS	<i>Verket för Högskolaservice</i> (The Swedish Agency for Higher Education)
<i>T-Centralen</i>	Central Train Station (Stockholm)

CHAPTER ONE

1 INTRODUCTION

This is a qualitative research that deals with the integration of adult Somali refugees (aged 18-55) in the Metropolitan region of Stockholm in Sweden. Integration here denotes the process of interaction between Somali refugees and ‘native’ Sweden (to be referred herein as ‘mainstream Swedish society’). It is about the ‘qualitative’ ‘participation’ of the former in the socio-economic and political spheres of societal life in Sweden (see Diaz, 1993:7).

This research is based on interviews conducted with twenty-eight Somalis (consisting of nineteen men and nine-women), ten Swedish officials (seven at local municipal level and three at national level) and a focus group interview involving eight Somalis (whom the researcher believed were knowledgeable about the current situation of Somalis in Sweden). The research engages with and draws from the respondents’ accounts about their experiences, perceptions, understandings, interpretations, and meanings regarding the integration of Somalis in Sweden. It relies partly on the trajectories of individual Somali research respondents. Most of these respondents have spent more than a decade and half in Sweden, at the time the interviews were conducted. Nonetheless, this research is not autobiographical – and will not present those trajectories on an individual-by-individual case. Rather it uses the personal information solicited from the respondents to gauge the current situation of Somalis and the challenges they face in their adoptive country, Sweden.

1.1 The Purpose of the Research

The overall purpose of this research is to explore how Somali refugees in Sweden orientate themselves to the prevailing Swedish system of integration, and to find out those factors that impinge upon their (Somalis) integration into mainstream Swedish society.

1.2 The Research Questions

The thesis' main research question and two sub-questions flow directly from the stated aim of this research. The main research question is: How do Somali refugees in Sweden orientate themselves to the prevailing Swedish system of integration? The sub-questions are: (a) what factors impinge upon the integration of Somalis in Sweden? And, (b) how do cultural factors intrinsic to Somalis in Sweden inhibit their integration into mainstream Swedish Society? The answers to these questions are summarized in the Conclusion Chapter of this research.

1.3 Raising the Issues

There are about 30000 (unofficial estimates) Somalis in Sweden. The official estimate puts them at just over 25000 in 2009 (SCB, 2009). In terms of demographics, Somalis are regarded as 'a young group' in Sweden, where '54 % are under 30 years of age, only 19 % are over 40 years, and, only 0.1% are older than 65 (Wallin & Ahlström, 2010:358). The geographical

distribution of Somalis across the country is hugely uneven. However, the majority of Somalis in Sweden live in the three metropolitan regions of Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö (Wallin, 2009:18). In Stockholm the majority of Somalis live in City's northern suburbs of Rinkeby and Tensta (see Appendix 2).

The majority of Somalis came to Sweden from the early 1990s onwards as refugees. The main trigger for their exodus was the civil war in Somalia which broke out in the late 1980s. The civil war led to the overthrow of the late Siad Barre's regime in January 1991, and, subsequently to the collapse of central government in Somalia. Other reasons that led to Somalis to immigrate into Sweden include family reunion, the prospects of finding work and better education, and, pressures from peers and family.

Arguably, the easiest part for Somalis has been the migration into Sweden – a country which until recently had a more or less open borders for those seeking refuge from persecution and socioeconomic hardships worldwide. The harder part for Somalis, however, has been their integration into a society that was, in many respect, very different from theirs, ethnically, socially, economically, politically, culturally and 'religiously' (taking 'Swedish secularism' as a form of 'religion'). It is this variance from the prevailing socio-economic and cultural standards of 'native' Swedes (i.e., the majority group) that presents the main 'integrative dilemmas' relating to the integration of Somalis, and to which a great deal of focus in this research is based upon. This research has identified five main 'integrative' dilemmas relating

to the integration of Somali integration in the following spheres. They include: (1) employment (labour market) and education, (2) housing, (3) institutional forms of discrimination, (4) culture and religion, and, (5) gender patterns and roles.

As noted above, Somalis in Sweden are socially, economically and culturally excluded from mainstream society. First, they suffer from widespread long-term unemployment. Indeed, the performance of Somalis in the Swedish labour market has characteristically been low. Studies in 1999 and 2003 have shown that only approximately 23-27 % of Somalis were engaged in some form of economic activity, e.g., education, training programmes, employment, etc, in Sweden (Invandrarverket, 1999; Carlson, 2006). The situation may have slightly improved in recent years. Nonetheless, for many Somalis unemployment has become somewhat quasi-permanent and a vicious circle from which they find it difficult to break. In Swedish official and media circles, ‘mass unemployment’ is often evoked when referring to the lack of labour market integration among Somalis. In education, which is inextricably linked to the labour market, the performance of Somalis has equally been uninspiring. Many Somalis are ‘poorly’ or ‘unsuitably’ educated and lack appropriate skills to improve their position in the Swedish labour market.

Secondly, Somalis predominantly live in segregated urban suburbs. In Stockholm, the majority of Somalis live in Tensta and Rinkeby – two segregated suburbs – where immigrants constitute 90% and 86% of the inhabitants respectively (USK, 2008; USKa, 2008). Living in

these areas entails a number of challenges, notably, the lack of connectivity with the host population, unemployment, poor services in comparison to other suburbs, high staff turnover in vital service areas (e.g., education, health, social services, etc); as well as, perceived high crime rates. Other problems include relative poverty and overcrowding.

Thirdly, Somalis suffer from institutional forms of discrimination in society (cf. Invandrarverket, 1999). This occurs in many spheres. Nonetheless, the focus on institutional discrimination in this research is limited to that which is embedded in the Swedish labour market and housing. In this research, institutional discrimination in the labour market was most pertinent in the recruitment processes of employing organisations. This was identified as a major concern for Somalis since gaining a foothold in the labour market was a main target for many Somalis, given their unemployment. It was at this ‘entry point’ where ‘gatekeepers’ (recruiters) were perceived, by a number of respondents, to be most effective in their discrimination against Somalis. In housing, Somalis (like other immigrant applicants) also felt they were bypassed on the waiting-list/queue-system in favour of ‘native’ applicants, by housing agents. The ‘steering’ of immigrants into immigrant dominated suburbs and away from the less segregated suburbs of Stockholm was one of the striking examples of how institutional discrimination in housing often afflicted Somalis.

Fourthly, the inability of Somalis to integrate into mainstream Swedish society is mainly linked to their ‘divergence’ from the prevailing cultural standards in Sweden. ‘Excessive’

divergence in culture and ‘religion’ (taking Swedish secularism’ as a form of ‘religion’) between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes is bound to create frictions that adversely impacts on the integration of the former with the latter. When it comes to culture, the main difference revolves round the intensity Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes attach to family bonds. The role ‘native’ Swedes attach to the ‘family’ is less intense in comparison with Somalis; hence, the family is less ‘constraining’ among Swedes. Somalis, on the other hand, are very loyal to their clan families, making the goals of the groups a priority over individual goals.

Moreover, Somalis subscribed to Islam, a religion that is seen as a ‘threat’ to Swedish secularism (which is fiercely secular). Indeed, Islam is a major source of contention that has great implications for the integration of Somalis and Sweden. In particular, the lack of demarcation between Somali cultural practices (equated to *state*) and Islam (*religion*) on one hand, and the apparent relative deep degree of religiosity among Somalis in the backdrop of a highly secular Swedish environment, on the other, were endorsed as problematic by the overwhelming majority of respondents in this research.

Furthermore, another ‘dilemma’ that confronts Somalis in Sweden is how to align their ‘divergent’ patriarchal gender patterns to prevailing socio-cultural standards and norms in Sweden. This occurs in a country and society that is regarded as one of the least gendered societies in the world; where the participation of women in economic activities (employment, education, etc) is rated as among the highest in the world; and, where socialisation processes

in the family and educational institutions (from pre-schooling onwards) are geared towards the eradication of patriarchy in society.

1.4 The Outline of this Research

The thesis consists of ten chapters. Chapter One provided the introduction and highlighted the aims of the research, the research questions and raised the main ‘integrative dilemmas’ confronting Somalis in Sweden. Chapter Two introduces and expounds on the term integration. Integration is looked at both as a concept and a mode of integration (i.e., assimilation and multiculturalism). Assimilation and multiculturalism, as modes of integration, form the theoretical basis for explaining and predicting the integration of minorities (or immigrants) into society. The assimilationist approach stipulates that, for minorities to ‘integrate’, they have to adopt the host culture. The multiculturalist approach holds that people can and should integrate by participating in all spheres of societal life (e.g., social, economic, political, including culture), without necessarily abandoning their original culture, in favour of the host community’s. The chapter concludes by explaining the rationale for choosing these two ‘theoretical model’ in this research.

Chapter Three maps Swedish immigration and integration policies. It deals with immigration from a historical perspective: ‘from emigration to immigration’; and ‘from immigration to integration’. The chapter shows how these two policies evolved over time. It reveals that both

were incremental and subject to revisions, alternating in the case of immigration, from free migration to tightening controls. With regard to integration, the policy evolved from being a vague, generous and ambitious policy at first but successively transformed to become a more reality-based policy. These alterations were often influenced by the prevailing economic situation and political atmosphere in the country. Moreover, the chapter outlines the objectives of Swedish integration policy and the programmes adopted in Sweden to operationalise the stated goals of this policy. The chapter concludes by highlighting some of the recent changes occurring both to immigration and integration policies in Sweden.

Chapter Four provides the methodological framework of the research. It is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the procedures followed in conducting the research. It focuses on the choice of qualitative research methodology, methods, sampling strategy and the data collection processes involved, including the issue of access. The impact of the researcher's identity/biography on the research (reflexivity) is also reflected upon. The second section deals with the steps taken to analyse the research, i.e., transcription, familiarisation and coding of the research data. It also stipulates the analytic approach employed (thematic analysis), and the rationale for its choice in this research.

Chapter Five deals with the importance of employment (labour market participation) and education in the integration process of Somalis. It describes how 'unemployment' rather than 'employment' dominates the discourse and reality relating to Somali refugees in Sweden. It

highlights ‘unsuitable education’ and the ‘perceived’ prevalence of ‘illiteracy’ among Somalis in Sweden. The chapter also illuminates the ‘emergent’ perception of how Somalis are said to have failed to ‘make greater use’ of the educational opportunities available to them in Sweden.

Chapter Six gives an outline of the housing situation of Somalis in Stockholm, which is primarily a pattern of residential segregation from mainstream society. The chapter begins with a brief definition of housing/residential segregation, followed by a brief discussion on the dimensions and types of residential segregation. The bulk of this chapter discusses the causes, maintenance and perpetuation of residential segregation between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes, viz.: ‘personal preference’ (of wanting to live in close proximity with one another), ‘socio-economic’ factors (e.g., unemployment, low education, low income, etc), and ‘unintended’ consequences from policy changes.

Chapter Seven highlights institutional forms of discrimination in Swedish labour market and housing. Within the context of Swedish labour market relation, institutionalised forms of discrimination occur in workplaces. However, it is the kind of discrimination embedded in the employment screening procedures of employing organisations in Sweden that presents the greatest challenge to Somalis, and hence, it’s pre-eminence in this chapter. With respect to housing, the chapter underscores the role of housing corporations and agents as ‘gatekeepers’ when allocating accommodation to immigrants/refugees like Somalis.

Chapter Eight deals with cultural and ‘religions’ differences between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes. With regard to culture, the main ‘differences’ between the two stem largely from the intensity individuals attach to the role of the ‘family’. With respect to religion, the chapter focuses on the tensions between Islam (a religion Somalis subscribe to) and Swedish secularism, particularly as pertains to the public domain. Islam is perceived as a ‘threat’ to the Swedish way of life, hence, a major source of contention which in turn has enormous implication for the integration of Somalis in Sweden.

Chapter Nine identifies ‘differences’ in gender relations patterns between Somali and ‘native’ Swedes. Gender equality dominates gender patterns among Swedes, whilst patriarchy defines spousal relationships among Somalis. Patriarchy amounts to an ‘excessive’ deviation from the normative gender relation standards in Sweden, not least because Sweden is one of the least gendered societies in the world – hence, the consternation with patriarchy in society. The chapter also reveals evidence that suggests Somalis in Sweden are beginning to ‘renegotiate’ the patriarchy inherent in their culture. This renegotiation is made possible due to the influences from a proactive social welfare system (that promotes gender equality through its diverse policy initiatives) and a society (i.e., Swedish) with different normative practices, expectations and attitudes with regard to gender issues.

Chapter Ten brings together the main themes raised in this research. The themes outlined in this chapter are discussed under various sub-titles organised around specific research questions. The chapter also provides a number of policy recommendations relating to

immigrant integration, and in particular, as they pertain to Somalis immigrants in Sweden. A brief account of how this research has contributed to existing knowledge and suggestions about ways forward with regard to future research is also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

2 THE ‘CONCEPT’ AND ‘MODELS’, OF INTEGRATION

This chapter explores the concept and models of integration. The chapter attempts to answer the following questions. What is integration? And, how does integration through assimilation differ from integration through multiculturalism? It begins by defining the concept of integration, by acknowledging its contested nature. It then moves on to discuss its types, as well as its applicability in the Swedish context.

The models of integration explored are assimilation and multiculturalism. These models form the theoretical basis for explaining and predicting the integration of immigrants (or minorities) in society. The assimilationist approach stipulates that, for immigrants/minorities to ‘integrate’, they have to adopt the host society’s culture. The Multiculturalist approach, on the other hand, holds that people can integrate by participating in all spheres of societal life (e.g., social, economic, political, including culture), without the need to abandon their original culture, in favour of the host community’s culture.

Nonetheless, the analysis of this research has found that whilst these two options (integration through assimilation or through multiculturalism) might be the path chosen for many immigrants (present or subsequent generations) to integrate into society, there is the possibility for a third ‘option’, i.e., that of ‘rejecting’ both. That means some individuals or groups may

opt consciously not to integrate into mainstream society at all (either through assimilation or multiculturalism). When it comes to Somalis in Sweden, this latter ‘option’ applies to the ‘resisters’, – a group that stands in stark contrast to the ‘pragmatists’ who seem to integrate in accordance with the goals of Swedish multiculturalism. This will be discussed more detailed in Chapter Ten.

2.1 What is Integration?

The literal definition of integration – which is often in line with the assimilationist approach – views integration as ““ a process of making the ‘whole’, but also one that has an ‘added’ connotation in which the ‘whole’ is formed ‘from constituent parts’” (Van Kooten, 1959:2). In this context the ‘whole’ would stand for the wider Swedish society (also referred to herein as ‘native’ Swedes) whilst the ‘constitute parts’ stands for minorities (e.g., Somalis).

Contemporary definitions of integration (in line with the multiculturalist approach) view integration as a process of interaction between the migrant and host population. As the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE, 2005:14) comprehensively puts it, integration is a ‘process of change’ which is ‘*dynamic*’, ‘*two-way*’, ‘*long term*’ and ‘*multi-dimensional*’. Integration is ‘*two-way*’ in the sense that ‘it places demand’ on both immigrants and the host society; and ‘*long term*’, because it is a process that starts when the immigrant first ‘arrives’ into the country, and, continues even after the immigrant has ‘become an active

member of society from a legal, socioeconomic and cultural perspective' (ECRE, 2005:14). Integration is '*multi-dimensional*' because 'it relates both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects' of societal life' be it 'cultural', 'socio-economic', 'political', etc (ECRE, 2005:14). It also relates to the immigrant's 'own perceptions' regarding his his/her membership and acceptance by the society (ECRC, 2005:14).

2.1.1 Integration: An Elusive Concept

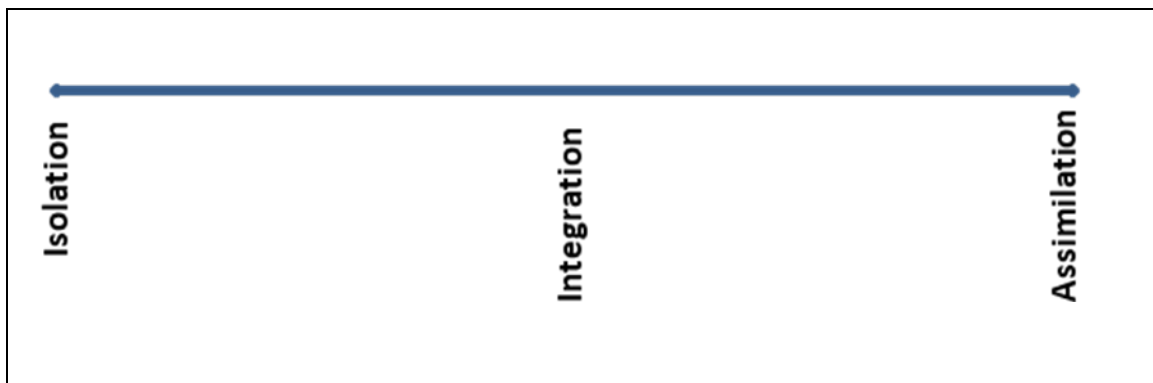
Integration is not as straightforward concept since people often interpret it differently (Lemaitre, 2007:10). The reason is because integration often covers a very wide area, ranging from assimilation to multiculturalism (c.f. Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000:3). Assimilation denotes the adoption of the majority's culture by minorities. Multiculturalism allows minorities to maintain their original cultures. Indeed, whilst some people view integration as a process of assimilation, others view it as neither multiculturalistic nor assimilationist, but 'something in between' (Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000:3).

Van Kooten (1959:45), for example, places integration somewhere in-between '*isolation*' and '*assimilation*', although in 'reality', he says, it is much closer to the latter than the former (see Figure 2.1). Lemaitre (2007), on the other hand, uses a 'spectrum' (see Figure 2.2) to clarify his version of integration. Lemaitre (2007:10) notes, 'at one end of the spectrum is the notion of an economic/social convergence between the immigrant and native population' with

regards to employment, income, education, housing, political participation, etc., and, ‘at the other end is the much broader notion of integration as assimilation’, which implies conforming to the host country’s cultural standards, ‘values’ and ‘beliefs’.

The elusiveness of integration is further compounded by the fact that its ‘abstract’ meaning (e.g., tolerance to other cultures, etc) often conceals a ‘subtext’ that ‘remains intolerant to cultural specificities deemed outside the mainstream’ (Li, 2003:3). To Li (2003:7), this subtext points to the vitality of ‘shared values’ and ‘compliance’ to host society’s ‘standard of life’ as being ‘essential to successful integration’ (cf. Lemaitre, 2007:10). Indeed, according to Li (2003:12), ‘official discourse constructs a language of integration’ that ‘pays nominal service to diversity and multiculturalism’, nonetheless, it also ‘warns against the peril of excessive diversity’ from the host society.

Figure 2.1: Integration as ‘in-between’ ‘Isolation’ and ‘Assimilation’



Source: Adopted from Van Kooten’s descriptions (1959: 45-54).

Figure 2.2: A Spectrum to Illustrate what Integration Entails



Source: Adopted from Lemaitre's description (2007:10).

It is no coincidence, therefore, that many academic and policy discourses point to the elusiveness of the term integration. Indeed, to many writers the term integration embodies confusion (Gordon, 1964), incoherence (Ager and Strang, 2008), wideness, ambiguity and imprecision (Grillo, 1998), 'treacherousness' (Banton, 2001:151-2), and 'looseness' (Jenkins (1967:267, as cited in Grillo, 1998:177). This is summed up in Ager and Strang (2008:166), who argue that this 'widely differing literature' of the term integration, and its usage, is a 'threat' to the 'development' of both 'coherent policy' and 'productive public debate', on the subject'. Table 2.1 illuminates some of the concerns which are associated with integration (its elusiveness, lack of straightforwardness, etc).

Table 2.1 Selected Quotes to Highlight the Elusiveness of the term Integration

Author	Concern on Elusiveness of the Term, Integration
Gordon (1964:84)	Integration is frequently embedded in a gilded form of rhetoric that is not calculated to facilitate clarity or precise analytical distinctions. In some cases one must even make one's own guess as to whether the discussant is talking about "ideal goal" or historical process which has already occurred, or both.
Grillo (1998: 176-7)	Through much of the argument run terms such as 'assimilation', 'integration', 'multiculturalism', 'pluralism', and 'separation'. All are ambiguous, and sometimes used interchangeably: 'integration' for 'assimilation', 'multiculturalism' or 'pluralism' for 'integration', 'separatism' for 'pluralism': the discourse is not noted for its precision.
Banton (2001:151-2)	It is a treacherous concept, resting on a mathematical metaphor, which assumes that the social processes of group interaction can be likened to the mathematical processes of making up a whole number, into which the fractions are being combined. A person can be well integrated into a local group without being so well integrated into a national society because local groups are sometimes in conflict with national societies. Until there are satisfactory ways of measuring the degrees to which members of ethnic majorities are integrated into their national societies it will not be possible to measure the integration of members of ethnic minorities.
Jenkins (1967: 267, as cited in Grillo, 1998:177)	Integration is perhaps a rather loose word. I do not regard it as meaning the loss, by immigrants of their own national characteristics and culture. I do not think we need in this country a 'melting pot', which will turn everybody out a common mould, as one of a series of carbon copies of someone's misplaced vision of the stereotyped Englishman ... I define integration, therefore, not as a flattering process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, coupled with cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.
Ager and Strang (2008:166)	Both coherent policy development and productive public debates are threatened because the concept of integration is used with widely differing narrative.

Source: Developed as part of this study. Courtesy: To the various authors quoted.

2.1.2 The Swedish Context

In the Swedish context, integration is a ‘notion’ that ‘replaced assimilation’ in the mid 1970s, and ‘indicates’ a ‘greater degree of tolerance and respect for other cultures in society’ (Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000:2; Li, 2003). Integration, which occurs within Swedish ‘multicultural project’, not only allows ethnic minorities to ‘maintain’ their cultural practices and religious beliefs, but it also strongly encourages them to engage fully in the socio-economical and political spheres of the society (cf. Diaz, 1993:1; Grillo, 1998:178; Cashmore, 1994:148 cited in Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000:3). Nonetheless, there is a caveat. The freedom to maintain cultural and religious uniqueness does not envisage a situation where ethnic minorities insulate themselves from the wider Swedish society. On the contrary, ethnic minorities are expected to ‘pledge’ their loyalty (though not explicitly stated) to their new society; and, to share basic values with all citizens in the country (cf. Li, 2003; Van Kooten, 1959).

In Sweden, the term integration is multifaceted. Integration is a key ‘policy objective’ in the areas of refugee, immigration, resettlement, and community cohesion (cf. Ager and Strang, 2008; Ager *et al.*, 2004; Li, 2003). It is a strategy adopted by governments to facilitate the smooth transition of newcomers. It is a ‘desirable outcome’ by which newcomers become part of the mainstream society (Li, 2003:3). It is also seen as a measure by which one can ‘gauge’ the ‘success and failures’ of that ‘outcome’, as well the ‘efficacy’ of a country’s immigration

and integration policies (Li, 2003:3; see Ager *et al.*, 2004; Phillimore and Goodson, 2008; Muttarak, 2004; see Bauböck, 1994:5).

2.1.3 Types of Integration

Integration is multidimensional: it is psychological, legal and political, socio-economical and cultural. Once an individual (or a group) attains all these levels of integration, it is arguable then to talk of that individual (or group) as having successfully integrated into society. We examine each of these levels or types of integration sequentially.

2.1.3.1 Psychological Integration

‘Acceptance’ by the host community and the ‘willingness’ of the newcomer to become incorporated into the host community (Weimer, 1996:48); and, the feeling of security and stability on the part of the newcomers in the new environment (see Ager and Strang, 2008), all go a long way in helping individuals become integrated psychologically into mainstream society. The acceptance accorded to immigrants by the host society relates often to whether they are viewed as ‘temporary residents’ or as permanent settlers (Weimer, 1996:49). The willingness of the newcomer to become part of society has psychological dividends in the sense that the newcomers becomes motivated to learn the host society’s language, make friends with members of the host society and identify with his/her adoptive country. As

Weimer (1996:49) sums up, integration is not likely, if the immigrant is viewed as a 'temporary resident', and or, if the migrant is not willing 'to accept membership, both in the legal sense and by adopting a new identity'. Thus the attitudes of migrants towards the host community and vice versa are important factors that facilitate the 'psychological' integration of immigrants into mainstream society.

Psychological integration is often affected by the intentions of the newcomers in relation to whether or not they wish to settle in the country permanently, or return to their countries of origin; or whether they are temporary sojourners who want to relocate to a third country. Again, as Weimer (1996:49) points out, integration into mainstream society is problematic if people wish to be in a country temporarily since they would have no need 'to go through the process of redefining their identity', which is seen as central to immigrant incorporation.

I argue psychological integration is both an initial step, as well, as a concurring one (in relation to other types of integrations) as individuals endeavour to incorporate themselves into mainstream society.

2.1.3.2 Legal and Political Integration

For a society to take the first step to facilitate integration, it has to put in place policies that give immigrants and their children the same legal status as that of the native population (Weiner, 1996). One such first step might be to grant ‘resident’ newcomers permanent residency status (Bauböck, 1994; Engbersen, 2003). The second step could involve granting citizenship rights to immigrants and their children (Ager & Strang, 2008; Weimer, 1996). Citizenship is a contract between the individual and the state. It is defined as a ‘legal category that introduces a set of rights and obligations between the individual and the state’ (Vah & Lusic-Hacin, 2008:10). The ‘obligations’ are somewhat straightforward and are often evoked to mean, ‘the duty’ to pay taxes, ‘completing compulsory education’, ‘obeying the law of the land’, and so on (Bloemraad, *et al.*, 2008:154).

Citizenship ensures that all citizens, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, cultural or religious affiliation, gain access to such basic rights as social welfare including health, employment, housing and education (Strang & Ager, 2010). It contributes to their ‘inclusion’ and ‘participation’ in societal affairs (Strang & Ager, 2010:592; see Bauböck, 1994; Engbersen, 2003). As Ager and Strang (2008:166) argue, the granting of ‘citizenship rights’ is the *foundation* for integrating immigrants.

There are two main dimensions of citizenship. The first, as alluded to, involves the granting of legal status and rights to those of the native population (Weimer, 1996; Bloemraad, *et al.*, 2008:154; Strang & Ager, 2010). Nonetheless, the mere fact of obtaining citizenship (legal and political integration) does not ensure that an individual or a group is fully integrated. However, it does provide the individual (or the group) a sense of stability and security necessary for other types of integration, namely, socio-economic- and cultural integration to occur. As Bauböck (1994:29) confirms, access to citizenship rights is ‘a necessary precondition’ for any form of stable integration in a democratic society.

The second factor, which is more crucial, is the dimension that associates citizenship with ‘belongingness’ (Bloemraad, *et al.*, 2008:154). This entails a deeper meaning of citizenship which calls to mind such notions as shared values, identity and nationhood (see Strang & Ager, 2010). This phase carries with it a strong feeling of emotional attachment of being part of that society (Bloemraad, *et al.*, 2008:154). McPherson (2010:546) equates ‘belongingness’ to the acquisition of the distinctive national and cultural identity of the host society by newcomers. This includes shared identity, values and a sense of nationhood – i.e., a “sense of ‘place’ and ‘home’” (Castle, *et al.*, 2002:413). ‘Belongingness’ results in a ‘deeper commitment’ by the individual to his society/community, and, vice versa. The individual feels there is a mutual acceptance and acts accordingly. As Strang & Ager (2010:594) point out, ‘to belong to a nation’ shapes one’s understanding of his/her ‘own integration’. Acceptance or a higher degree of ‘wantedness’ makes individuals want to continue their association in a given society (Strang & Ager, 2010:594).

2.1.3.3 Socio-economic Integration

Ager and Strang (2008:169) identified employment, housing and education (to which they called '*makers and means*' of integration) as important areas in which immigrants have to perform favourably for them to integrate successfully into mainstream society. Ager *et al.*, (2004) argued that for immigrants to become integrated, they need to achieve 'outcomes' within employment, housing and education that are, or equivalent to those, achieved by members of the host community. This resonates with Bauböck (1994:40) who provides a further breakdown of employment, housing and education as important indicators of immigrants' social-economic (structural) integration in society. To Bauböck (1994:40), employment encompasses such measures as participation ('employment') rates in the labour market, the 'proportion of skilled labour', 'percentage' of minority in 'self-employment and professions'; housing is dealt with in relation to 'the concentration and segregation of groups across urban districts', the 'quality of housing', 'percentage of house ownership', etc; whilst, education, refers to the 'distribution over type of schools', 'participation in preschool' education, 'educational performance', 'adult education skills', enrolment in colleges and universities, etc.

Indeed, socio-economic integration 'determines the position of immigrant groups' in social and economic life of the receiving country (Bauböck, 1994:38; Keefe and Padilla, 1987:18; Engbersen, 2003:61). According to Bauböck (1994:38), 'social position' in society is hierarchal. The higher a group occupies in that hierarchy, 'the higher its level of structural

integration'. Groups represented in the top strata of a hierarchy have a higher share of national 'income', 'professional prestige', 'education', high status 'residential areas', etc (Bauböck, 1994:38). The group that performs poorly in these aforementioned indicators would find itself in the bottom strata or stratum of that hierarchal arrangement. Many of its members would likely be unemployed or likely to underperform educationally attainments, become spatially segregated, and endure prejudice and discrimination.

2.1.3.4 Cultural Integration

Cultural integration is often equated with assimilation (Bauböck; 1994:41) and refers to the adoption by a minority of the host or majority's culture (Van Kooten, 1959; Gordan, 1964; Bauböck, 1994). It entails the acquisition by immigrants of the majority society's language, social rituals, memories, sentiments and attitudes (see Gordon, 1964). Cultural integration leads to the disappearance of cultural differences between immigrants and the majority members. It is also at this stage where structural barriers such as discrimination are said to disappear (Gordon, 1964). Cultural integration occurs normally after several generations, with many writers putting it at or after the third generation (see Van Kooten, 1959).

2.2 Towards Theoretical Models

This section explores the models of integration, i.e., assimilation and multiculturalism. The assimilationist approach stipulates that, for minorities to ‘integrate’, they have to adopt the host’s culture. The Multiculturalist approach, on the other hand, holds that people can integrate by participating in all spheres of societal life (e.g., social, economic, political, including culture), without the need to abandon their original culture, in favour of the host community. These theoretical models can also be used to predict how subsequent immigrant generations are likely to integrate into society. After all, integration is intergenerational, hence, the need to look beyond first generation immigrants in Sweden.

These models are deployed in this research for a number of reasons. First they provide the theoretical basis for explaining and predicting the integration of minorities (or immigrants) in society. Second, they provide the ‘theoretical language’ or ‘concepts’ needed to explain the integration – the phenomenon under investigation (cf. Blaikie, 2000). Third, they have a relationship with the overall topic under investigation (i.e., ‘integration’).

2.2.1 The Assimilationist Approach

This sub-section leans heavily on the work of Milton Gordon (1964) on assimilation. Gordon's work on assimilation still stands as a classical text to which many writers and researchers on immigration refer. As Alba & Nee (2003:23) affirm, 'Gordon's singular contribution was to set down a synthesis that elaborated a multidimensional concept of assimilation'. Muttarak (2004) also holds that 'Gordon's (1964) sub-processes of assimilation', continue to act as benchmarks when investigating the degree to which ethnic minorities assimilate into the host society (see below).

Assimilation is both a process and a policy strategy. As a process, assimilation occurs when two groups, often minority and majority groups, belonging to 'different racial and cultural backgrounds' come into 'continuous first-hand contact with one another' – with subsequent 'changes' occurring in the original 'cultural patterns' and 'behaviour' of the former group (see Redfield, et. al, 1936 (as cited in Gordon, 1964:62; Alba & Nee, 2003:38). It refers to the 'adoption' by the minority of the host or majority's culture or the 'process' leading to this adoption (see Park & Burgess, 1921:735; and, Rose, 1956:557-8, as cited in Gordon, 1964:62-66). It entails a 'process of interpenetration, whereby, minorities acquire' not only the 'language and social rituals of the native community', but also the 'memories, sentiments, and attitudes of native persons' (Park & Burgess (1921:735, as cited in Gordon, 1964:62). Assimilation is gradual but when it occurs, it results in the 'disappearance' of cultural differences between groups (Alba & Nee, 2003:19; Gordon, 1964). The point at which

divergent ethnic groups ‘converge’ is often the ‘end point’, the point at which assimilation is achieved (Gordon, 1964). Once assimilation occurs, it becomes ‘irreversible’ (Jiménez, 2010:10; Gordon, 1964; see Alba & Nee, 2003:65).

Assimilation is also a policy approach pursued by some governments in order to ‘incorporate’ their minorities into society. Here assimilation is viewed as a trajectory on which minority groups are expected to move, and where convergence and cultural alignment with the host community is encouraged. Governments pursuing this strategy accord the host culture an ‘exclusive’ position in society. The host culture becomes the ‘master cultural mould’ that provides not only the reference point for immigrants and their children to emulate but also the opportunity with which they ‘can measure their relative degree of adjustment’ to the prevailing norms and values of the dominant group in society (Gordon, 1964:72).

2.2.1.1 The Sub-processes of Assimilation

Assimilation is not only gradual but also ‘incremental’ and ‘cumulative’ (Alba & Nee, 2003:38). It is often a matter of degree since no two persons, or groups may assimilate exactly in the same way. Gordon’s (1964) synthesis of assimilation accounts for the above by arguing that assimilation occurs in stages. According to Gordon (1964), each stage or sub-process takes place in varying degrees – the culmination of which is the disappearance of differences between ethnic minority or group(s) and the host community concerned. Gordon’s (1964) sub-

processes of assimilation involved cultural, structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional, behaviour receptional, and civic assimilation. Nonetheless, although Gordon wanted us to believe that assimilation occurred in stages or in sequential manner, the reality is that these sub-processes are often interwoven and inseparable and must thus be comprehended of as being only ideal-types.

Cultural assimilation (or acculturation) is a social process that leads groups, with different cultures, achieve a common culture. Acculturation encompasses not only such items of culture as dress, cutlery, language, food, sports, arts, etc – which were relatively easy to appreciate and acquire – but also those less tangible items such as values, memories, sentiments, ideas and attitudes (Gordon, 1964). Cultural assimilation is ‘concerned’ with the total ‘adoption by minorities of the prevailing value orientation’ of the host society (Weller, 1974).

Structural Assimilation is defined as the ‘social, economic, and political integration’ of an ethnic minority group into mainstream society (Keefe and Padilla, 1987:19). To Weller (1974:523), structural assimilation is realised when minorities achieve demographic and socioeconomic traits that are equivalent to those of the natives. Structural assimilation is often seen as both a precursor to, and, a consequence of cultural assimilation.

Marital assimilation is a process of ‘fusion’ of minorities ‘interbreeding’ and ‘intermarrying’ with members of the host society (Park & Burgess (1921:737, as cited in Gordon, 1964:63-4). Intermarriage is an important indicator of the degree of assimilation because it denotes the extent to which, (a) a minority group member is able to ‘mingle with the host society’s marriage market; (b) interaction across group boundaries exists; and (b) intimate link between social groups become binding (Muttarak, 2004:1). It is imperative, however, to note that ethnic minority groups have different patterns of intermarital relationship with the host community, since their experiences differ (see Muttarak, 2004).

Marital assimilation is often a consequence of structural assimilation since the latter facilitates the entrance of minority groups into ‘the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society at the primary group level’ (Gordon, 1964:80). Marital assimilation inevitably leads to a substantial amount of intermarriage between the two groups (Gordon, 1964; Bernard, 1980; Bigelow, 1980).

Next in line, is *identificational assimilation*. Identificational assimilation occurs when a minority group loses its ethnic identity by identifying and becoming part of the wider host and core society (Gordon, 1964). Identificational assimilation in turn leads to *attitudinal receptional assimilation* and *behavioural receptional assimilation* (Gordon, 1964). Simply put, it is when a minority internalises the attitudes and behaviours of the core society, and aligns its attitudes and behaviour to the prevailing norms and values in the wider society, that

the host society is likely to respond favourably and accept that group as one of its own. It is further argued that whilst attitudinal receptional assimilation heralds the absence of prejudice in society, behavioural receptional assimilation leads to the absence of discrimination in society. Groups assimilating at this level thus face no prejudices and discrimination. As Gordon (1964) puts it, the descendants of the original minority group become indistinguishable from the host or core group. Hence, prejudices and discrimination cease to be a problem in society. Gordon (1964:62) states:

Assimilation has not taken place, it is asserted, until the immigrant is able to function in the host community without encountering prejudiced attitudes or discriminatory behaviour.

Civic assimilation takes place when assimilation has become complete ‘in all intrinsic as well as extrinsic cultural traits’ (Gordon, 1964:80; see Parekh, 2006:200). Intrinsic cultural traits’ include a group’s religious beliefs and practices – its ethical values, folk recreational values, literature, historical language, a sense of common past, etc’ – and constitutes the vital ingredients of the group’s cultural heritage, and which are derived from that heritage (Gordon, 1964:78-9; see Parekh, 2006). Extrinsic cultural traits encompass such aspects as the dress sense, patterns of emotional expression, as well as a group’s adjustment to its local environment, including the present one (Gordon, 1964:78-9; see Parekh, 2006). Also included in extrinsic cultural traits are class experiences and values since these are – in a real sense - external to the core of the group’s cultural heritage (see Gordon, 1964:78-9; see Parekh, 2006). Indeed, when civic assimilation is achieved, ‘no value conflict on civic issues’ is likely

to arise between ‘the now dispersed descendants’ of the ethnic minority and members of the core society’ (Gordon, 1964:80).

2.2.2 The Multiculturalist Approach

The multiculturalist approach is proactive in that it attempts to create the conditions for achieving a ‘multiculturally constituted society’ (Parekh, 2006). Policies are adopted to incorporate minorities as equal members in society; improve their socioeconomic and political positions in society (Rydgren, 2004, Vertovec, 1998); and, to counter structural factors, e.g., discrimination, in society (see, Rydgren, 2004; Parekh, 2006; Vertovec, 1998).

Multiculturalism is also about the politics of recognition. It is adopted to accommodate the cultural and religious needs of minorities, with an aim to facilitate the ‘inclusion’ and ‘adjustment’ of minorities in society (Modood, 2007:19; see Parekh, 2006, Barry, 2001, Kymlicka, 1998; Vertovec, 1998). It entails moving away from one cultural standard (as hitherto was the case) to an understanding and celebration of diversity (i.e., of ethnic groups, ideas and values) in society. It means allowing minorities to retain their cultures whilst at the same time exploring ways to accomplish a common culture based on commonalities.

Multiculturalism allows people to separate their relationships depending on whether these relationships occur in public or private spheres (Rex, 1986, 1991; Vertovec, 1998). Public sphere involves shared laws, free enterprise, equal access to state institutions and provisions, etc. This is the kind of relationship that is bound to occur when people of different ethnicity meet at state or local institutions, colleges, in work places, etc. The private sphere, on the other hand, is left as a matter for, and between, individual citizens. Religion is, for example, a matter relegated to the private domain.

Nonetheless, there are other writers like Parekh (2006:220) who argue that, cultures constantly encounter one another, both formally and informally (cf. public and private spheres above) in multicultural societies. Accordingly, in order to facilitate the emergence of a multiculturally constituted culture, both private and public realms need to encourage intercultural interaction (Parekh, 2006:222). To Parekh (2006:222), these two realms are inseparable since they ‘deeply influence each other’.

Two types of minorities are distinguished in the discourse of multiculturalism, viz.: ‘national minorities’ and ‘ethnic minorities’ (Kymlicka, 1995:10-11). National minorities are often ‘self-autonomous’, ‘territorially concentrated’ and have ‘historically’ been ‘part’ of the wider society. Normally, they wish to ‘maintain themselves as distinct societies’ alongside the majority culture, and ‘demand’ various forms of ‘autonomy or self-government’ to ensure their ‘survival as distinct societies’ (Kymlicka, 1995:11). Examples of these societies include

the Sami of Sweden. Ethnic minorities, on the other hand, are a product of migration. They want to integrate into the larger society, become ‘accepted as full members’ of society – and do not wish to be ‘separate or distinct’, from the majority society (Kymlicka, 1995:11). In this research, we will limit our discussions to ethnic minorities since our target group, Somalis, fall under this category.

2.2.2.1 Separate and Competing Domains

Multiculturalism encompasses various competing domains. Accordingly, to get a grip on this all important and encompassing concept, it is imperative to examine the issues that take centre stage in the discourse (of multiculturalism). The discourse on multiculturalism often dwells on the following: Multiculturalism as (a) a broad political ideology, (b) a set of policy initiative (aimed at enhancing the smooth transition and incorporation of minorities into the host society), and, (c) a strategy to restructure institutions, with the intent to create a ‘multiculturally constituted society’ (see Parekh, 2006; Kymlicka, 1998; Vertovec, 1998).

2.2.2.1.1 A broad Political Ideology

Multiculturalism is an ideology that recognises diversity. It takes into consideration differences in attitudes, values, behaviours, languages and cultural identity (Ryder, *et al.*,

2000:05; Kymlicka, 1995:14). It is an ideology that accepts, recognises and promotes such cultural and ethnic pluralism as a long-term feature of society.

Multiculturalism emerged in the mid 1970s onwards as an antithesis to the assimilationist approach to immigrant integration (Vertovec, 1998; Van Oudenhaven, *et al.*, 2006). It was necessitated by the new realities that rendered assimilation both as untenable and undemocratic, given the increasing ethnic diverse in society, thanks to immigration. In particular, it was the ‘patronising imposition on minority people’ who wish to ‘maintain their cultural and ethnic integrity’ that was untenable and undemocratic (Alba & Nee, 2003:1). Above all, multiculturalism was in tune with the needs of postmodern society – a society that was increasingly characterised not only by diverse cultures, ideas and values but also one that was constantly and rapidly transforming, and where old certainties, e.g., familiar customs and traditions of doing things and conceiving the world no longer applied (see Giddens, 2001).

Indeed, multiculturalism is recognised as a struggle or social movement which is located within a postmodernist paradigm (Vertovec, 1998; Giddens, 2001). It amounts to the ‘deconstruction’ of the ‘old’ way of thinking, and ‘reconstruction’ of a ‘new’ one (Uris (1993:95, as cited in Watson 1995:61). Like postmodernism, it stands for a ‘new moral or truth relativism’ (Modood, 2007:7; Pérez-Torres, 1993:161), and recognise that society is highly pluralistic. Both postmodernism and multiculturalism argue that society can no longer be geared towards the maintenance and reproduction of a ‘homogeneous population’. It argues

for a more ‘participatory’ heterogeneous society where diversity of cultures, greater degree of equality and justice for all citizens irrespective of creed, religion, ethnicity or culture not only co-exist but are celebrated (Young, 1990:16-17, Giddens, 2001:674; Modood, 2007:7).

Moreover, like postmodernism, multiculturalism rejects ‘grand’ or ‘metanarratives’ – i.e., ‘a system of thought that attempts to understand the social world within a single, all-encompassing critique’ (Fritzpatrick, 2008; see Giddens, 2001:674, 293, 696); acknowledges the existence of a multiplicity of ‘ideas and values’ in society (Giddens, 2001:267; 696; Pérez-Torres, 1993:161; see Vertovec, 1998; Watson, 1995); and, endorses the view that there is no one truth or single way of knowing. It acknowledges that people and societies ‘interact in a complex and non-linear way’ not least because of their different ‘historical and cultural specificities’ (Lather (1991:21, as cited in Watson, 1995:61).

In this paradigm, assimilation is seen to represent the old way of thinking, knowing, of comprehending truth, realities, etc. Assimilation represents only one truth, one way of knowing, one culture, one narrative and one ‘single set of rules that applies to all citizens’ – rules that were geared towards the ‘control and dominance’ of minorities in society (Barry, 2001:300). In essence there was ‘certainty and predictability’ about assimilation (cf. Watson, 1995; Giddens, 2001). In multiculturalism, by contrast, ‘everything’ is constantly in the ‘flux, transforming and doing so rapidly’ – it is an era that is characterised by ‘new risks and uncertainties’, one that stands in stark contrast to the ‘old familiar world’ which was ‘always

geared' towards familiar 'customs', 'traditions', 'established way of doing things' and comprehending the world, among others (Giddens, 2001:680). Multiculturalism thus entails the deconstruction and negation of hitherto held conventions about ethnic minority cultures, and the way different cultures had to relate to one another (as minority and majority communities).

2.2.2.1.2 Multiculturalism as a Set of Policies

In part, multicultural policies were adopted as a response to obvious problems in society vis-à-vis ethnic minorities in society. These included the difficulties of adapting, discrimination and other negative attitudes towards minorities, unequal power relationships between minorities and the majority group, and, the negative impact of immigration, especially, on areas where there were sizeable ethnic minority groups, e.g., in larger metropolitan areas, among others (Churchill, 1987; see Andersen & Solid, 2003). For the most part though, multiculturalism is about adopting a set of policies that are aimed at improving, and advancing, the socioeconomic and political positions (i.e., integration) of minorities in society (Rydgren, 2004, Vertovec, 1998). These policies are also in part directed towards accommodating the cultural needs of minorities (Barry, 2001, Parekh, 2006, Kymlicka, 1998).

Multicultural policy objectives relating to immigrant integration often concur with the objectives of the country's integration policy (see Chapter Three). These include the

introduction of measures that facilitate the smooth transition and incorporation of minorities into society. In the case of Sweden, they include ‘introduction programmes’; labour market initiatives; anti-discrimination legislation to combat discrimination; and development initiatives in metropolitan areas to combat residential segregation (see Chapter Three). They also include policies that promote and achieve virtues such as social justice, equality, social cohesion, harmony, etc, in society.

In particular, multicultural policies emphasise extending equal opportunities and rights to all citizens. According to Parekh (2006:211), equal opportunities enable ‘all citizens to acquire the capabilities and skills needed to function’, as well as, ‘to pursue self-chosen goals equally and effectively’. It is also anticipated that, through equal opportunity measures, minorities would ‘overcome’ some of the ‘disadvantages’ that are ‘derived from cultural differences’ with the host society (Parekh, 2006:211).

Another emphasis of multiculturalism has been how to counter structural factors that may inhibit the advancement of minorities, e.g., discrimination, disadvantage and exclusion (see Vertovec, 1998; Rydgren, 2004; Parekh, 2006). As Modood (2007:19) confirms, multiculturalism aims to ‘eliminate visible instances’ of ‘negative stereotyping’ and ‘discriminatory-type actions’ that hinder the inclusion and adjustment of minorities in society (see Churchill, 1987, Rydgren, 2004).

2.2.2.1.3 Institutional Restructuring

A great deal of multicultural policies aims at restructuring institutions (Parekh, 2006; Kymlicka, 1998; Vertovec, 1998). Institutional restructuring is necessitated by the need to (a) adopt to the diversity (of groups, ideas, values, etc) in society (Kymlicka, 1998:44), and, (b) achieve a ‘multiculturally constituted society’ (see Parekh, 2006). According to Vertovec (2010:84), there are a number of institutional ‘options’ that are often undertaken in order to operationalise multiculturalism. These include, ‘the establishment of bodies, committees, or councils that local and state institutions can readily consult on issues that relate to ethnic minorities’; the ‘creation of ethnic minority organisations that run programmes that are publicly funded’; the ‘provision of public funds for interpreting facilities’, and, the ‘training of core public sector workers e.g., social workers, health-care practitioner, teachers, police, etc – to gain understanding about the values and practices of ethnic minorities (Vertovec (2010:84; Vertovec, 1998; see Vollmer, 2004; Vollmer, 2005; Geddes, 2003; Lemaitre, 2007:15; Andersen & Solid, 2003).

Some key institutions are targeted for restructuring in order to achieve a multiculturally constituted society. Education stands out as most pertinent example where restructuring of institutions has been most effective. The reasons why ‘multicultural education’ is emphasised in multicultural societies are numerous. The broader aims include, helping citizens communicate in order to overcome cultural and language barriers. It also includes, overcoming injustices against ‘historically marginalised and excluded groups’, e.g., minorities, and other

excluded groups such as women, the disabled and gays, among others (Banks & Banks, 2010:1). More specifically, though, multicultural education aims to empower ethnic minority children in order to increase their 'self-esteem'; create the 'basis for social understanding in the classroom; and, to 'mould' children into becoming multicultural citizens as they grow up (Parekh, 2006); counter prevailing educational culture and beliefs that may hinder pupils from reaching their potentials (see Banks & Banks, 2010:1); provide ethnic minority children with a compatible environment, particularly, in their 'initial transition' into a new schooling situation (Churchill, 1987); make changes to the curricula so as to eliminate stereotypes of different ethnic groups (Churchill, 1987); encourage educators to 'use examples and content from a variety of cultures' to counter 'cultural assumptions, perspectives, biases in many disciplines' that 'influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed' (Banks and Banks, 2010:23); increase the awareness of educational staff about minority cultures; and, where possible to provide staff that have the same cultural background as ethnic minority children (Churchill, 1987; Banks & Banks, 2010).

Other measures introduced to promote multicultural education include home language instruction in schools – which is a common practice in Swedish schooling system. Another common measure is the dissemination of culturally-relevant information about ethnic communities in the country. The latter is aimed at 'developing a knowledge base on persons belonging to minorities'; eliminate misinformation; and to create a positive attitude towards cultural differences (Churchill, 1987:66).

2.3 The Rationale for Choosing these Models

As noted previously, the rationale for choosing assimilationist and multiculturalist models as the theoretical basis for this research are many. Firstly, these models had a relationship with the overall topic under investigation (i.e., 'integration'). They had a direct bearing on the research questions of this research. Second, these theoretical models provided the 'theoretical language' or 'concepts' needed to explain the phenomenon under investigation (cf. Blaikie, 2000).

These models evoked many questions that were theoretically laden. Examples of these questions included, whether or not Somalis wanted to be integrated or assimilated; the extent to which Somalis were willing (or were expected) to retain their original culture; the way in which Somalis orientated themselves to the prevailing Swedish system of integration; the extent to which cultural factors intrinsic to Somali culture inhibited their successful integration into society; their receptiveness to policy initiatives intended to enhance their integration into society; whether they were suspicious of these policies, and so on and so forth.

As alluded to, these theoretical models were specifically chosen because they provided the 'theoretical language' (or 'concepts') needed to explain the phenomenon under investigation, i.e., the integration of Somalis in Sweden (cf. Blaikie, 2000:26). They provided 'the vocabulary and meaning' for contexts' and brought forth 'multiple definitions and disputes'

with regard to the phenomenon under investigation (cf. Blaikie, 2000:162). For example, the concepts employed in this research relating to the phenomenon under investigation, i.e., integration, encompassed ‘assimilation’, ‘pluralism’, ‘interaction’, ‘integration’, ‘fitting-into’, ‘incorporation’, ‘diversity’, ‘social cohesion’, ‘separation’, ‘resistance’, etc. These concepts are indeed peculiar to the theoretical models chosen for this research.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to provide a conceptual understanding of ‘integration’. It started by looking at existing definitions and types of integration in literature, acknowledging the elusiveness of the term. This chapter also highlighted the ‘theoretical models’ of immigrant integration, viz.: ‘assimilation’ and ‘multiculturalism’. Each model ‘interpreted ‘reality’ (i.e., explained ‘what integration was’ and ‘how best immigrants were to integrate’), though in ‘distinct ways’ (cf. Möller *et al.*, 2003:2). Assimilation entails a process that leads to the adoption of the majority’s culture by minorities. It aims for the elimination of differences in cultures since it regards ‘cultural and ethnic diversity’ as ‘threat’ to the social, economic and political order of society (cf. Banting and Kymlicka, 2006:1). Assimilation takes time and is gradual. It occurs not in a linear manner but in stages. It involved cultural, socioeconomic, marital, identificational and civic assimilation. Once assimilation occurred though, it was irreversible. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, involves a process that allows minorities to retain their original culture whilst at the same time encouraging them to participate in the

socioeconomic and political spheres of society. It encouraged and celebrates differences in cultures, ideas and values.

Both assimilation and multiculturalism were multidimensional. They represented dialectically opposed ideological stances. Both represented processes of change and both were policy measures, either actively (e.g., multiculturalism) or tacitly (e.g., assimilation) pursued by states (e.g., in Europe) in one form or another. Both embodied policy objectives and measures; all aim at achieving the integration of minorities into mainstream society.

Although many people often relegate assimilation to the relics of history, it is very much present and alive (see Alba & Nee, 2003). It remains the preferred option for a large section of the populous as the 'best' way of integrating minorities into society. The upsurge of support for rightwing parties who are opposed to immigration in many parts of Europe and more recently in Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK, etc, does lend credence to the assertion that assimilation remains a serious alternative to immigrant integration even in contemporary times.

CHAPTER THREE

3 THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION IN SWEDEN

This chapter sets out to map Swedish immigration and integration policies. Immigration policy is concerned with ‘regulating the flows’ of immigration and ‘control of aliens’ whilst integration policy is concerned with making the ‘transition’ of newcomers to settle in the country permanently as smooth as possible (Hammar, 1985:7; Dahlström, 2007:320). The first section of this chapter (on immigration) provides a prelude to the latter Section (on integration). The reason why such a disposition is adopted is because the two, immigration and integration, are inexorably linked and cannot, therefore, be treated in isolation.

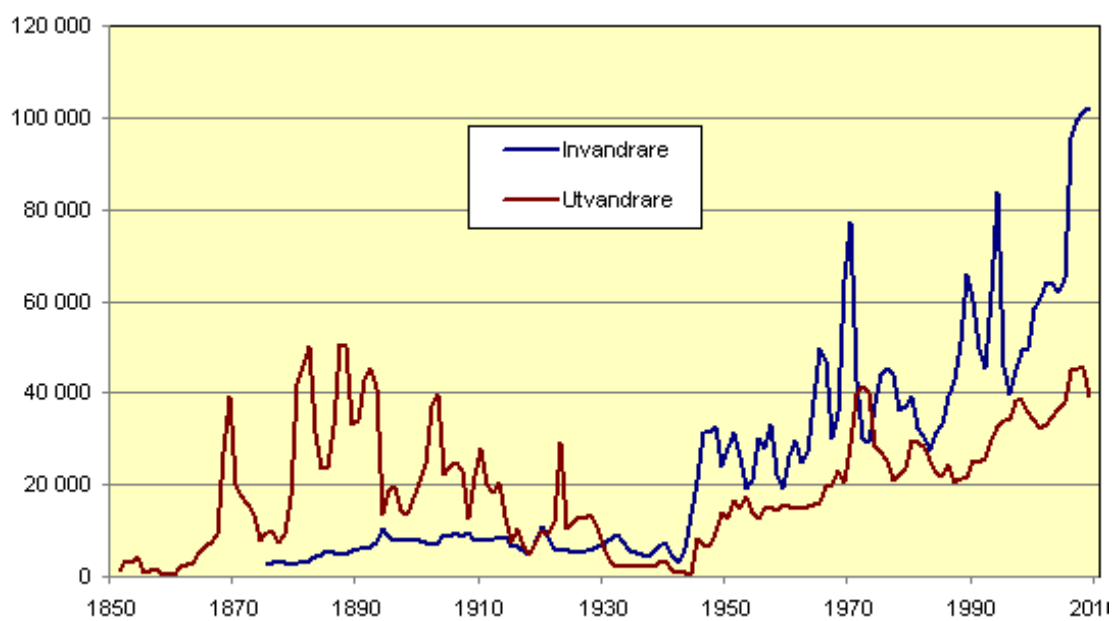
3.1 Immigration: A Historical Perspective

Sweden was predominantly a land of emigration in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries (Wadensjö, 2009). Swedes emigrated primarily to the North America (USA and Canada) but also to Australia, Argentina, Germany, Denmark and Norway (Andersson & Solid, 2003; Lithman, 1987; Lemaitre, 2007, Wadensjö, 2009). There were a number of factors that triggered Swedish emigration, particularly, during the Nineteenth Century. The most commonly cited included ‘poverty’, ‘population increase’, ‘falling mortality rates’, ‘low agricultural wages’, ‘poor arable land’, ‘archaic agrarian system’, ‘a succession of poor harvests’ and ‘high unemployment’, among others (Karlström, 1980:7-9; Wadensjö, 2009:2).

Despite the dominance of emigration, immigration into Sweden was occurring concurrently (as shown in Figure 3.1). Nonetheless, it was not until 1930 that immigration into Sweden finally ‘surpassed’ emigration (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994:11). The reasons were twofold. First, the US government imposed restriction on immigration in the 1920s, as its economy deteriorated in the wake of the Great Depression which meant fewer were able to emigrate from Sweden (Wadensjö, 2009; Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994; Runblom, 1994). Second, many Swedish-American returned to Sweden, during the same period, thereby, contributing to an increase in immigration into Sweden (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994).

After WWII, Sweden became a more permanent ‘net-receiver’ of international migrants (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994:11; Runblom, 1994:627; see Andersson & Solid, 2003). Widgren (1980, as cited in Andersson & Solid, 2003:67) cites three main reasons why Sweden finally became a ‘land of immigrants’. Firstly, Sweden stayed neutral in WWII, hence, was under ‘moral obligation’ to welcome refugees fleeing war and persecution. Secondly, Swedish birth rates in the 1930s were alarmingly low. Thirdly, Swedish women became increasingly drawn into the labour market in the 1940s onwards. Fourthly, post-war unemployment had decreased to about 2% as the demand for Swedish goods (particularly from Europe whose infrastructure lay in ruins due to the WWII) increased rapidly.

Figure 3.1: Immigration and Emigration 1851-2009.



Key:

— Immigration (*Invandrare*)

— Emigration (*utvandrare*)

Source: SCB (2009): (http://www.scb.se/Pages/TableAndChart_231104.aspx), Date accessed 12/04/10.

3.2 Swedish Immigration Policy

Swedish immigration policy has changed direction a number of times since the Nineteenth Century (Lithman, 1987; Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994; Runblom, 1994; Geddes, 2003; Andersson & Solid, 2003; Wadensjö, 2009). Prior to 1917, Swedish immigration policy was very liberal in nature. All people of 'European origins' could, for example, enter Sweden without the need for passports or visas (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994:11; see Runblom, 1994:627). Nonetheless, Swedish immigration policy was still 'closed' to people deemed unwelcome such as Gypsies whose presence in Sweden were highly resented by the majority population (Arnsberg, 1998:170).

The inter-war years (1917-1945) saw a decline in migration to Sweden following the adoption of a more restrictive immigration policy (Wadensjö, 2009:3). Passport, visas, residence and work permits requirement were re-instated. Work permits could now be issued depending on how the labour market performed. Foreigner nationals had to secure employment and approval from their respective national trade union(s) before they could travel to Sweden. These restrictions resulted in part from an intensive lobby from Swedish trade unions who were concerned about the prospect of employers exploiting cheap foreign labour (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994). It should be noted that the interwar period was characterised by a protracted industrial conflicts between organised capital and organised labour. Compromise between these two parties did not occur until the Saltsjöbadet Agreement was signed in 1938 (Baldwin, 1990; Lewin, 1994; Torbjörn 2004).

The adoption of the restrictive immigration policy was also attributed to the prevalence of nationalistic tendencies in Sweden society, especially, in the 1920s and 1930 (Hammar (1999:179, cited in Geddes, 2003:120). The Aliens' Act of 1927 was, for example, explicit in imposing restrictions on immigration on racial grounds. The Act stipulated, among others, that the 'Nordic race' was supreme, unique and god-given, and advocated for the preservation of 'Nordicness' against potential (racial and ethnic) *impurities* (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994:12). One group that bore the brunt of this legislation were the Jews – whose immigration into Sweden had dwindled to a mere trickle by 1938. The restriction on Jews was lifted when Germany invaded Denmark and Norway in 1940 (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994:12).

Another evidence of racially driven legislation occurred when earlier in 1921, the Swedish Parliament (*Riksdag*) established the Swedish Institute of Racial Hygiene. This infamous institute was to oversee a racial indoctrination programme that led to the sterilisation of more than 60000, persons (including physically and mentally disabled persons) who were deemed as unsuitable parents in Sweden (see Geddes, 2003:120). The practice of sterilisation continued as late as the 1970s in Sweden (Amstrong, 1997; Lennerhed, 1997; Geddes, 2003).

3.2.1 Immigration Policy 1945-1973

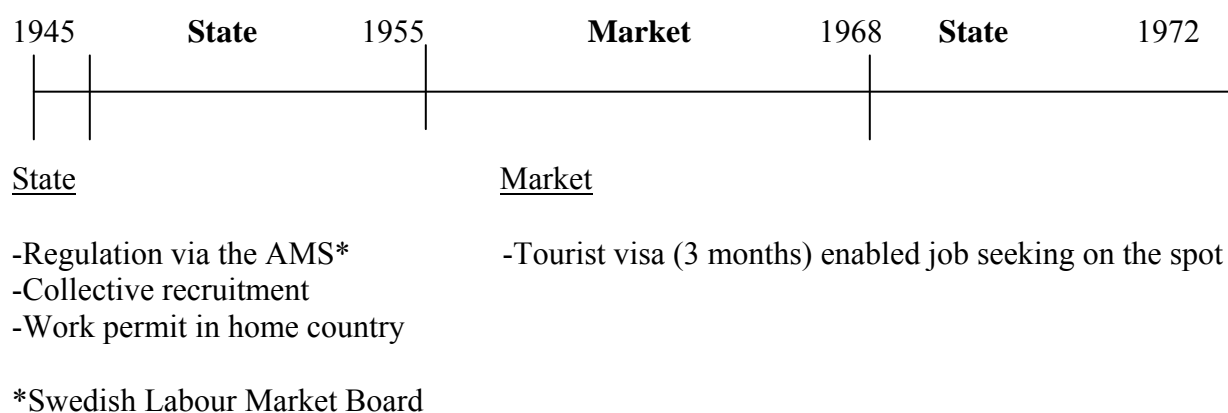
Sweden re-introduced a liberal immigration policy after WWII. Work permits for Nordic citizens were abolished in 1943. Immigration rules for other non-Nordic Europeans were also relaxed. Indeed, through this relaxation, European nationals were able to enter Sweden as tourists, apply for jobs and subsequently settle in the country. Moreover, rules for family reunification were also liberalised.

However, by the 1940s, it became apparent to Swedish policy makers that the nation could not rely on (a) Nordic labour migration alone, and, (b) the informal manner in which individual labourers from European countries entered the country to work (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994; Wadensjö, 2009). Accordingly, policy makers began to explore the possibility of importing labour en masse albeit in an orderly version (Torbjörn, 2006).

Consequently, the Swedish Government created a labour market commission in 1947 to recruit workers in Europe (Torbjörn, 2004:5). The commission began recruiting workers in Italy and Hungary in 1947, and in 1948, in Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Italy and West Germany (Andersson & Solid, 2003:65-102). In the 1950s, Swedish companies were able to directly recruit own labour through this collective transfer system, on condition that they consulted the trade unions and national labour market boards of respective countries. Sweden also reached Agreements with Yugoslavia and Turkey in 1966 and 1967 respectively (Torbjörn, 2004:5).

Besides, the Aliens' Act of 1954 ushered a renewed era of generous immigration policy in Sweden (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994; Wadensjö, 2009). This legislation was an amendment to existing immigration laws and was intended to enable foreigners, especially European workers, to visit Sweden and take up employment (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994; Torbjörn, 2006). As a sign of generosity, foreigners were not deported without their consent. Dubbed the 'tourist immigration policy', the generous immigration policy of the day was also in tune with the 'general optimism' in Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s, as a result of economic and industrial growth (Lundh & Ohlsson, 1994:60). Figure 3.2 summarises the institutional labour market arrangements between 1945 and 1972.

Figure 3.2: State or Market: Institutional Arrangements during the Labour Market Period



Source: Adopted from Torbjörn (2006:190)

Nonetheless, when the numbers of immigrants increased in Sweden in the mid 1960s, immigration became a political issue. There was also a simultaneous political discourse advocated for a more regulated labour migration policy, as well as, the need for assimilating immigrants than was hitherto the case. This discourse was driven by many important societal actors, including Swedish political parties, trades union and the media.

The debate led to some concrete outcomes (see Andersson & Solid, 2003; Lithman, 1987). With regard to demands for a more regulated immigration, restrictions were imposed on non-Nordic immigrants in 1967. Non-Nordic workers were required to obtain work permits, secure jobs and accommodation before entering Sweden (Andersson & Solid, 2003; Lundh & Olsson, 1994). In relation to the need for assimilation (then the model of integration), measures that facilitated the ‘integration’ of immigrants were adopted. For example, the government decided to subsidise organisations that provided Swedish language courses for immigrants by 1965 (Lithman, 1987). From 1966 onwards municipally-run immigrant bureau(s) began to provide free information services to immigrants. In 1969, the Swedish Migration Board (SIV) was set up to cater for many immigration and immigrant related issues (Lithman, 1987; Andersson & Solid, 2003; Wadensjö, 2009). SIV was among other things charged with the task of receiving and settling immigrants in Sweden.

3.2.2 Decline in Labour migration

By the mid 1970s, labour migration into Sweden declined sharply. This was precipitated by a slump in the Swedish economy (with a decline in GNP, manufacturing and industrial production); rising unemployment; the global oil crisis in 1973; and, a strong opposition from Swedish trade unions towards migration (Ålund & Schierup, 1991:22; see Lundh & Olsson, 1994; Runblom, 1994). Indeed, the prevailing assumption from mid 1970s onwards was that labour migration was no longer an option in Sweden and that internal labour (both foreign and indigenous), could now cater for those needs generated by the labour market (Nelhans, 1973; Alund & Schierup, 1991). Nonetheless, as labour migration dwindled, another form of immigration, notably, refugee and family reunification was becoming commonplace from early 1970 onwards in Sweden (Wadensjö, 2009; Westin, 2006; Andersson & Solid, 2003; Ginsburg, 2001; Ålund and Schierup, 1991; Lundh & Olsson, 1994).

3.2.3 Refugee Migration Increases

Sweden has provided refuge to people fleeing religious and political persecution for centuries. But, it was not until the early Twentieth Century that the numbers of people entering Sweden became significant. The first major arrivals of refugees into Sweden occurred, between 1917 and 1918, from Russia and Finland (Andersson & Solid, 2003). The 1930s saw refugees coming mainly from the Baltic region (Westin, 2006).

During WWII, Sweden adopted a more restrictive Refugee policy. For example, asylum was not granted to people fleeing racial persecution like the Jews from Germany, Austria and Eastern Europe (Lundh & Olsson, 1994). The underlying reason for denying asylum to Jews was mainly due to 'anti-Semitism' and other 'discriminatory' practices linked to the 'racial ideology prevalent in Sweden at that time' (Westin, 2006:3). However, after WWII, Sweden adopted a more generous refugee policy. Many Jews were now able to settle in Sweden under the so-called 'Bernadotte action' (Lundh & Olsson, 1994:26-27; Andersson & Solid, 2003:65). 'Bernadotte action' aimed to rescue as many people as possible from the Nazi concentration camps in Germany and Nazi-occupied countries.

In 1956 and 1968, refugees were also received from Hungary and Czechoslovakia, respectively, as a consequence of the invasion by the Soviet in these countries (Lundh & Olsson, 1994). The 1970s saw refugees coming from Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Peru and Uruguay), Asia (Syria, Turkey) and Eastern Europe (Poland). In the 1980s refugees came from Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya), the Middle East and Persian Gulf (Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria), Latin America (El Salvador and Peru) and Eastern Europe. In Early 1990s, Sweden became home to a relatively very large influx of refugees from the Former Yugoslavia (Ginsburg, 2001:211). Sweden also accepted a considerable number of refugees from Iraq and Somalia in the 1990s onwards. Refugees from Somali continue to arrive into Sweden at the present time.

3.3 Integration Policy in Sweden

This section looks at Swedish Integration Policy over time. Like many countries in Western Europe, immigrant integration is a key policy area in Sweden. The imperativeness of integration policy is underscored by Banton (2001:151) who argues that, no country can contemplate to relegate its immigrant integration policy into some sort of secondary policy without dire consequences. Banton (2001:151) goes on to say, ‘any failure on the part of states to integrate its immigrants will prove costly, economically and socially’. Sweden has, on its part, invested enormous resources in terms of finance and work force over the years to realise an operational immigrant integration policy, which despite the challenges it faces, nonetheless, can be seen as vital for incorporating its newcomers into mainstream society.

Chronologically, integration policy proper began in 1966 when ‘a task force was established to deal with information to immigrants’ (Lithman, 1987:18). In 1968, a Parliamentary Commission on immigration was appointed ‘to examine the position of immigrants’ (Lithman, 1987:18). The recommendation of this Commission eventually bore fruit. Evidently, there was a shift towards some kind of accommodation to meet the cultural needs of immigrants (Hammar, 1999:172, cited in Geddes, 2003:120). Moreover, language training for adult immigrants and home language instruction (*hemspåkundervisning*) for immigrant children at public schools were provided free of charge; local immigrant councils (*invandrarbyråer*) were created; interpretive services for immigrants were granted; and, permanent status to foreign

workers were granted to ‘ensure their welfare state integration’ (Geddes, 2003:120; Lithman, 1987:18).

In 1974, another Parliamentary Commission on immigration was set up to map out a more ‘accommodative multicultural policy’ for Sweden (Geddes, 2003:120). In 1975, following the commission’s recommendations, Sweden officially proclaimed itself a multicultural society. Three overarching policy principles were to steer the nation towards this declared direction (of multiculturalism), namely, *equality*, *freedom of choice* and *partnership* (Lundh & Olsson, 1991; Ålund & Schierup, 1994; Lithman, 1987; Jederlund & Kayfetz, 1999; Geddes, 2003; Muus, 2003; Soininen, 1999; Westin, 2006).

Equality meant immigrants were to expect the ‘same opportunity, rights and obligation’ and ‘comparable’ living conditions with those of native Swedes (Soininen, 1999:685). It also meant immigrants were to be accorded equal opportunities in employment, housing, social care and education – i.e., as enjoyed by the rest of the population (Soininen, 1999:688; Westin, 2006:7). *Freedom of choice* was intended mainly for the ‘private’ domain whereby ethnic minorities were ‘at liberty to choose whether to adopt Swedish cultural identity or retain their original identity’ (Westin, 2006:7). *Partnership* connoted co-operation and solidarity between Swedes and immigrants (Westin, 2006:7). Immigrant groups and the Swedish-born population were to work together to resolve issues of common interest (Jederlund & Kayfetz, 1999:1). Partnership was to ‘take place on equal terms’ and in the ‘spirit of shared purpose’ (Lithman,

1987:20). Through partnership, society was to actively combat the barriers of integration, mainly, xenophobia and ethnic discrimination; and, together immigrants and Swedes were to ‘promote harmonious ethnic relations’ (Lithman, 1987:20). Partnership also entailed that immigrants were ‘granted voting rights in local elections’ (Westin, 2006:7).

According to Lithman (1987:19), the expressed aims of these goals were to: (a) give immigrants ‘equal rights and opportunities’ as the rest of the populous; (b) ‘respect the identity and integrity’ of immigrants as individuals; and (c) accord immigrants the ‘opportunities to develop their cultural heritage’. However, as a caveat, these stated goals were to be mediated within existing framework of Swedish ‘fundamental principles’ with regards to ‘human coexistence’, ‘reciprocal tolerance, solidarity and cooperation between people’ (Lithman, 1987:19). It was explicitly emphasised, for example, that ‘Swedish values’ such as ‘individual rights’ and ‘equality between sexes’ were ‘non-negotiable’ (Lithman, 1987:20). Nonetheless, allowance was given, ‘where practical’, to ‘negotiate matters’ that may arise as a result of ‘cultural conflicts’ (Lithman, 1987:20)

3.3.1 Swedish Integration Policy (1975-1997)

In many ways, 1975 represent a turning point in Sweden’s history of immigration. ‘Ideas of Swedish multiculturalism’ were put into effect from 1975 onwards; immigrants were accorded ‘full welfare state membership’, and ‘same legal privileges’ as Swedish citizens; and, ‘faith’

was placed ‘in the ability of welfare state institutions to level out inequalities’ (Geddes, 2003:121). According to Geddes (2003:120-121), these measures were ‘remarkably inclusive in comparison to other European nations, many of whom were still struggling about what to do with their ‘guest workers’.

To Ålund & Schierup (1991:3), Swedish Integration Policy (1975-97) represented a form of planned and systematic diversity – what they called ‘prescribed multiculturalism’. Ålund & Schierup (1991:3) buttressed their assertion by the following: First, all actors, e.g., the State and its institutions, political parties, trade unions and the national association of local municipal administrations (*Kommunförbundet*) were ‘compelled’ to ‘embrace’ multiculturalism (see Dahlström, 2007:320). Secondly, ‘state-sponsored research commissions formulated policies to combat racism, discrimination, ethnic conflict and the development of a segregated society’. Thirdly, the Swedish public were readied to ‘accept’ the officially proclaimed ‘egalitarian’ multicultural ideology of ‘*equality*’, ‘*freedom of choice*’ and ‘*partnership*’. Fourthly, the state provided resources to immigrant organisations and other NGOs that work with immigrants.

3.3.2 The Need for a New Integration Policy

Whilst multiculturalism was supposedly the approach to integrate immigrants in Sweden, it soon became apparent the policy had begun to flounder. Indeed, by mid the 1980s, there was a growing uneasiness relating to immigration. The ever-increasing number of refugees from diverse backgrounds coming into the country did not bode well with some quarters in the population. Refugee camps were becoming overcrowded as the waiting time for processing asylum applications grew lengthier – a clear indication that there was a problem in regulating immigration in Sweden. The media and political discourse about immigration was intense. Municipalities were also becoming reluctant to accept more refugees.

The integration policy Sweden adopted from 1975 onwards was not, after all, as socially and economically inclusive of immigrants as earlier anticipated. As Ålund & Schierup (1991:37) confirmed, there was an increasing ‘disjuncture’ between the proclaimed intentions (declarations) and the actual development in Sweden. The authors also pointed to the following contradictions: ‘equality’ versus discrimination and a hierarchic ethnic division of labour; ‘freedom of choice’ versus exclusiveness and segregation; and, ‘partnership’ versus bureaucratic and techno-scientific monitoring (Ålund & Schierup, 1991:37). Indeed, marketed once as a ‘resource’, immigration was now becoming a social and an economic liability (see Ålund & Schierup, 1991).

By the early 1990s, the mood towards immigration and immigrants had changed drastically (Andersson & Solid, 2003; Ålund & Schierup, 1991; Geddes, 2003). Mass migration from the Former Yugoslavia and from Third World countries had almost sprawled out of control. At the same time, the nation's economy had 'steeped' into a 'deep recession' (Eliason & Storrie, 2006:833). For example, between 1990 and 1993, GDP in Sweden had declined by 6% ; unemployed quadrupled to 12-13% and social expenditure was curtailed (Eliason & Storrie, 2006:833; see Kersbergen, 2000:21-2, cited in Cochrane, *et al.*, 2001:4; Ginsberg, 2001:205). There was also a simultaneous 'drift towards' decentralisation and privatisation – i.e., to a more neo-liberal policy approach (Kersbergen (2000:21-2, cited in Cochrane, *et al.*, 2001:4). In the year 1994, the central government budget deficit exceeded 15% of GDP (see Hauptmeier, *et al.*, 2006:20). As a result, the position of immigrants in the labour market deteriorated; and residential segregation, especially, in the major metropolitan regions became commonplace. Moreover, overtly open right wing tendencies were creeping into the Swedish political landscape with populist parties like *Nydemokratiet* (the New Democratic Party) scooping a significant electoral gain during the 1991 parliamentary election. All these occurrences were particularly painful to Sweden, a nation that so rightfully gloats about its 'cradle-to-grave' and egalitarian type of welfare state.

As it turned out, the overarching principles of '*equality*', '*freedom of choice*' and '*partnership*' were over-ambitious and had to be modified accordingly, since 'discrepancies' emerged between the official proclamation of Swedish multiculturalism and reality on the ground (Dahlström, 2007:319).

3.3.2.1 The 1984 Parliamentary Report

Acknowledging that the ‘approach’ to immigrant integration (of ‘*equality*’, ‘*freedom of choice*’ and ‘*partnership*’) in Sweden ‘was too broad’, the 1984 Parliamentary Report made a number of recommendations (Geddes, 2003:121). According to Geddes (2003:121), a ‘link between future migrations into Sweden’ and the ‘country’s ability to integrate’ them successfully into society was to be made. Second, there was need to distinguish between ‘national minorities’ (e.g., Sami, Tornedal Finns, Swedish Finns, Roma and Jews who have lived in Sweden for centuries) and ‘immigrants and refugees’ (who have arrived or continue to arrive in Sweden much later) – recommending that national minorities be accorded a different status than those enjoyed by immigrants and refugees. Third was the need to accord ethnic minorities language and cultural protection on condition they respected ‘basic core Swedish values’ (Geddes, 2003:121).

3.3.3 Swedish Integration Policy (1997-2007)

The Swedish Parliament (*Riksdagen*) decided on a new integration policy in 1997. The Government Bill (no. 1997/98:16) entitled ‘*Sweden, the future and diversity – from immigration to integration*’ was the basis for this parliamentary decision (www.sweden.gov.se). The new policy now emphasised individual rights, responsibilities, empowerment, participation and the ability for individuals to become self-sufficient and self-

support, although it still took into account ethnic and cultural diversity of society as before (Gustafson, 2002:468: see Geddes, 2003).

According to the Swedish Government website (www.sweden.gov.se), the aims of this Swedish integration policy were as follows: Firstly, 'extend equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities to all regardless of ethnic, cultural, religious or gender background'. Secondly, 'create a community based on diversity (ethnic, cultural and religious diversity), i.e., a society characterised by mutual respect and tolerance in which everyone can take an active and responsible part, irrespective of background'. Thirdly, 'encourage individuals to support themselves, in order to become full members of society'. Fourthly, 'create the favourable structural conditions under which self-sufficiency/supporting strategy could be possible'. Fifthly, 'safeguard fundamental democratic values, (e.g., freedom of choice, association, worship, speech, etc), in society'. Lastly, 'prevent and combat discrimination, xenophobia and racism in society'.

3.3.3.1 Policy Programmes

In order to facilitate the integration of immigrants, the Government adopted a number of policy measures. A Government Report entitled, *Integration Policy for the 21st Century* (2001/02:129), spells out these measures. They include the following: the establishment of the Swedish Integration board in 1998 – which was to be responsible for the coordination of

Swedish integration policy; the enactment of a stricter anti-discrimination law to counter discrimination in society; development initiatives in the metropolitan areas – to counter the negative trend of segregation; an ‘introduction programme’ for new arrivals; putting immigrants’ skills and qualifications to use in the labour market; and, concentration of efforts for gender equality (Vollmer, 2004; Vollmer, 2005).

Accordingly, this sub-section examines the following measures in more detail: (a) the introduction programme; (b) labour market initiatives; (c) the efforts to counter ethnic discrimination; and, (d) development initiatives in the metropolitan areas. The role of the now defunct Swedish Integration Office (SIO) in the integration processes of newcomers will also be discussed briefly (see below).

3.3.3.1.1 The Introduction Programme

The Government provides funding to facilitate the smooth introduction and transition of newcomers and their families into society. This Programme is commonly known as the Introduction Programme. Through the programme, newcomers obtain ‘introduction into life in Sweden’, Swedish language instruction (SFI), housing and vocational upgrading or training where necessary (Lemaitre, 2007:16). Also included are the living expenses of newcomers and their families, day-care costs and other related expenses on children.

Until recently, the municipalities were responsible for the practical ‘administration, provisions, and coordination’ of introduction programmes (Lemaitre, 2007:15; see Andersen & Solid, 2003). The administration of the programme has since been transferred to the Swedish Employment Board (AMS). Nonetheless, municipalities still have a decisive collaborative role to play in how the programmes are run. Introduction Programmes apply between two to three years from the time a newcomer is placed in a municipality.

At the initial introductory phase, the authorities (previously the municipal refugee reception organisation, now the Employment Board) ‘carry out the preliminary assessment to determine’ how best or quick to introduce the new comer into the labour market (Lemaitre, 2007:15; see Andersen & Solid, 2003). It is routinely followed by an action plan in which the newcomer agrees to undertake the responsibility to comply with the aims and activities of the introduction programme (see Andersen & Solid, 2003).

3.3.3.1.2 Labour Market Initiatives

Labour market participation is undoubtedly fundamental to immigrant integration. The Swedish Government has accordingly invested enormous efforts and resources towards achieving this stated goal. The task of assisting immigrants to improve their labour market positions falls to the Swedish National Employment Board (AMS). Although AMS is a national body that serves all citizens irrespective of employment status and ethnic or national

background, it does, however, recognizes the vulnerability of immigrants, hence, the need for extra focus and resources towards improving the labour market situations of immigrants (Lemaitre, 2007; Vollmer, 2004; Vollmer, 2005; Andersen & Solid, 2003). For immigrants, labour market initiatives from AMS may either concur with, or introduced as a follow-up to, their introduction programme (see above).

Indeed, the Swedish Employment Board (AMS) has many special measures that benefit unemployed immigrants. They include intensive Swedish language courses, vocational training, training for employment and work experience at a workplace, among others. To stimulate recruitment of workers, AMS also extends incentives to employers (e.g., subsidizing employer payroll taxes and insurance contributions) to recruit workers. AMS also encourages entrepreneurship and self-employment to improve the chances of immigrants in the labour market. To that effect, AMS assists with start-up grants to increase the chances of new immigrant becoming self-employed and to ultimately succeed as entrepreneurs in their own right.

The overall goals of AMS is set under Sweden's Annual Action Plans, whose objectives include to improve or achieve employability, productivity, and quality of the workforce; combat unemployment and inactivity; promoting adaptability and mobility in the labour market; promote development of human capital and lifelong learning (see Vollmer, 2005). Implicitly, the Annual Action Plan aims to achieve inclusion and social cohesion in society.

3.3.3.1.3 *Efforts to Combat Discrimination in Society*

Swedish anti-discrimination law aims to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunity regardless of ethnicity, religious, gender, sexual orientation, age, etc (SFS, 2008:567). The law identifies and prohibits several types of discrimination viz.: ‘direct’ (or intentional), ‘indirect’ (or unintentional), ‘harassments that violate one’s dignity’ and ‘the instruction to discriminate another person’ (SFS, 2008:567). In particular, it cautions against discrimination in public sphere, e.g., education, employment, labour market situations (including the right to participate and benefit from trade unions), social services, health and medical care practice, transport services and housing, among others (SFS, 1999:130; SFS, 2003:307; SFS, 2008:567).

In addition, to combat ethnic discrimination, promote equal rights and opportunities, as well as, help implement the law against ethnic discrimination, the Swedish government established an ombudsman against ethnic discrimination (DO) in 1986. From January 2009, DO was merged with four other ombudsmen which together now operate under one government agency which works against discrimination and for equal rights and opportunities. The other ombudsmen include Equal Opportunities Ombudsman (*JämO*) which is in charge of sex discrimination; Disability Ombudsman (*HO*), in charge of discrimination associated with disabilities; and, The Ombudsman against Discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation (*HomO*), which oversees the laws on discrimination based on sexual orientation were followed.

The DO advises the government on matters pertaining to ethnic discrimination. It is also charged with the task of registering complaints of ethnic discrimination in society, and intervenes where necessary by appealing against cases that involving ethnic discrimination (www.do.se). The DO specifically aims at combating discrimination in workplaces. In particular, it identifies and recommends changes to unfavourable working conditions. It also highlights partiality inherent, particularly, in recruitment processes of employing organisations in Sweden. More commonly, the DO files lawsuits through employment tribunals on behalf of victims and their trade unions. Indeed, employers may be sued for perpetrating discrimination or for having failed to investigate and or take appropriate measures against discrimination and other forms of harassment suffered by workers from ethnic minority groups. Importantly, according to Swedish anti-discrimination law, the burden of proof lies more with employers than victims of discrimination, i.e., the employers have to ‘demonstrate’ that the employee has not been discriminated against (Ginsburg, 2001:212).

Besides monitoring the activities of employers, the DO also gives recommendations on diversity plans at work places. It also works with schools, trade unions, employer associations, etc, with the intention to encourage them to make special provisions for food, uniforms, holidays, etc, in order to accommodate the religious and cultural needs of workers. Furthermore, DO organises training seminars and training sessions to public officials, and provides information in the form of leaflets, brochures, handbooks, etc, in order to promote understanding and cohesion in Swedish society.

3.3.3.1.4 Development initiatives in the metropolitan areas

Here the objectives of two government policies (integration and urban/metropolitan policies) seem to merge. One of the goals of Sweden's urban/metropolitan objective is 'to combat social, ethnic and discriminating segregation in the metropolitan regions, and to work for equal and comparable living conditions for people living in the cities' (www.storstad.gov.se/english). To redress inequalities (e.g., reverse segregation) in cities/country, the Government believes that the following long-term goals are of particular importance: Employment rates in socially deprived housing areas should be raised for people living in those areas; benefit dependency should be reduced considerably; the proficiency in Swedish language for both children and adults should be enhanced; all children and adults should be given the opportunity to attain secondary education; all city neighbourhoods should be experienced as attractive and safe by the people who live there (i.e., should provide sound and healthy living environments); public health should be improved, both as measured in terms of health statistics and subjective assessments; and, finally, democratic participation should increase in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods (www.storstad.gov.se/english). All these goals aim to address structural patterns of inequality, exclusion, marginalisation and deprivation, and by implication, 'residential integration' in society (see Bauböck, 1994:37).

3.3.3.1.5 The Swedish Integration Office (Integrationsverket)

The Swedish Government created the Swedish Integration Office (SIO) in 1998. During its existence (1998-2007), the SIO was the main actor in enhancing immigrant integration policy and measures (i.e., policy programmes). Its tasks included the following: ‘to coordinate the integration of immigrants’; ‘ensure newcomers received support for their integration into society’; ‘create the necessary structural conditions for integration’; ‘mobilize all actors to effect change and contribute to diversity in society’; ‘provide funds to NGOs and immigrant organisations engaged in activities that promoted immigrant integration’; ‘prevent and counteract racism, xenophobia and discrimination’; ‘follow and evaluate development with respect to the ethnic and cultural diversity in society’; as well as, serve as ‘both an influential and knowledge-based public authority’ (‘Swedish Integration Policy’, *Integrationsverket*, 2006).

3.3.4 Recent Changes to Swedish Immigration and Integration Policies

3.3.4.1 Recent Changes in Immigrations Policy

Mass migration into Sweden in the 1990s, particularly, from the Former Yugoslavia, had a profound impact on the Swedish system, including, the welfare state, refugee reception apparatus, immigrant integration, etc. ‘High unemployment’ and ‘higher social-welfare dependence levels’ among immigrants were other issues that come under intense scrutiny

which ‘needed attention’ (Westin, 2006:8).

As a consequence, changes to Swedish immigration occurred in 1997 with the adoption of a new law, the New Alien’s Act (1997). In a way this law reaffirmed the 1951 Geneva Convention giving more emphasis in protecting people ‘in need of protection’, hence, doing away with the more relaxed interpretations that accepted ‘war deserters’ and ‘de facto refugees’ (i.e., people claiming asylum on political and religious grounds because they faced persecution from states or majority population in the countries they fled from (Lundh & Olsson, 1994:82). According to this Law (The Alien Act, 1997), ‘people in need of protection’ encompassed (a) individuals who risked persecution such as execution, long-term incarceration, torture and other forms of inhumane treatments because of their political- and religious convictions, among others; (b) people who fled wars (between nations or internal civil wars); and, (c) people with well founded fear of persecution for reasons of their gender or sexual orientation.

The introduction of the new law meant an emphasis on temporary permits as opposed to permanent residence permits. Sweden would grant asylum to persons fleeing conflicts and other forms of harassments but mainly on temporary basis (often on one or two-year basis). The hope was that asylum-seekers would return to their countries of origin once the political situations of those countries have improved.

Another fundamental change to Swedish immigration policy occurred when Sweden joined the European Union (EU) in 1995. As signatory to the EU, Sweden lifted restrictions on labour movement within the EU, accordingly. Sweden also harmonised its immigration policy with other EU member countries which entailed the ‘tightening of controls and management efforts at EU’s external borders’ (Van Houtum & Pijpers, 2007:291).

One of those tightening controls of EU external borders came with the adoption of the 1997 Dublin Convention. The Convention established a ‘system’ that placed ‘responsibility’ on the State where the asylum seeker first claimed asylum. The Convention also created a centralised database of asylum-seekers’ fingerprints. The objectives of this Convention was two-fold: One, it made it difficult for asylum-seekers to claim asylum in other EU countries other than the countries they first lodged their asylum applications; and, second, it made it possible for countries to share the burdens of refugee migration, so that no one single is ‘burdened’ with disproportionate numbers of asylum-seekers (Hurwitz, 1999:646). Nonetheless, as Table 3.0 and Table 3.1 show, the inflow of immigration from non-EU countries into Sweden has continued, despite all attempts to tighten immigration controls from outside EU.

Table 3.1 Immigration: Commonest Source of Immigration in 2009

Citizenship	Women	Men	Total
Sweden*	8 795	9 722	18 517
Iraq	4 834	3 705	8 539
Somalia	3 579	3 323	6 902
Poland	2 404	2 763	5 167
Denmark	1 545	2 216	3 761
China	1 611	1 487	3 098
Thailand	2 381	613	2 994
Germany	1 396	1 377	2 773
Iran	1 249	1 167	2 416
Finland	1 271	1 127	2 398

*Swedish Returnees

Source: SCB (2009).

Table 3.2 Somali Immigration to Sweden in Recent Years

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009
No. of Somalis	2974	3781	4064	6902

Source: SCB (2009).

3.3.4.2 Recent Changes in Integration Policy

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) ruled Sweden for the most part of the last century. It was ‘the dominant force behind social reforms’ in Sweden – shaping both the country and its renowned welfare state model (Esping-Andersen, 2006:168; Page, 2008:80-81). However, following the general election of autumn 2006 (and most recently, 2010), the SDP was defeated and power has passed to a right-centre coalition government. This has led to an ideological shift in Sweden. Many of the policies and programmes initiated under the reign of the SDP, including those of immigrant integration, have come under intense scrutiny. As a consequence, some policies and or programme were amended whilst others were abandoned altogether.

The Swedish Integration Office (SIO), viewed by many as the flagship of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), was dismantled by the Coalition in June 2007. Nonetheless, many of its specific tasks still remained, although they were transferred or incorporated into the work of other organisations. For example, the task of allocating funds to ethnic minority groups

were taken over by the Swedish Board for Youth Affairs (*Ungdomsstyrelsen*); its statistical and research functions were taken over by the Swedish Statistics (*SCB*) and the Multicultural Centre (*Mångkulturellt Centrum*) in Stockholm. The function to manage refugee reception was handed to the Migration Office (*Migrationsverket*). Another new shift was that Swedish Employment Service (AMS) took over the responsibilities for coordinating introduction activities from municipalities.

The overall work of integration came under a new ministry created called the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality. The Ministry has retained most of the policy in relation to integration intact. As before, the overall goal of Swedish integration policy reaffirmed its assurance of ensuring equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background. The government (through the new Ministry) still provides compensation to municipalities for refugee reception; continues with the introduction programme for newly arrived immigrants in society; and, provides funding for urban development initiatives in deprived areas. Increasing awareness for democracy and gender equality was also retained. However, what was introduced as new was a clause that relates to *civic orientation* which is aimed at communicating and transmitting the importance of Swedish ‘values of democracy and equality’ (<http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/2188/a/19443>, Date accessed 24/05/10).

3.3.4.3 Emphasis on Labour Market Integration

The one major departure point with the past, however, was the emphasis by the Coalition Government on activation and labour market integration of newcomers. The Swedish Employment Board (AMS), rather than municipalities, is now responsible for coordinating introduction activities, e.g., Swedish instruction courses for immigrants (*SFI*) as well as the Introduction Programme. Finding work for newcomers has, indeed, become a priority under the new Introduction Programme. Newcomers now have, for example, their own official mentors under the auspices of AMS to help and assist them with finding work. The drawing up of individual introduction plans, as well as, matching new arrivals' skills with a suitable municipality where the new arrival may find jobs weighs as one of the considerations in assisting new arrivals, among others.

3.4 Conclusion

The chapter has dealt with immigration and integration policies from historical and chronological perspectives. Immigration into Sweden was categorised into two broad types, labour migration and refugee migration. Labour migration was the predominant type of immigration in Sweden between 1945 and mid 1970s. From the mid 1970s onwards, however, refugee migration and family reunification became the more common form of immigration into Sweden.

The chapter also showed how both immigration and integration policies were evolutionary and cumulative in nature, although they were subject to numerous revisions over the years (Dahlström, 2007). Swedish immigration policy has, for example, alternated between free immigration and restrictive policies over the years. Nonetheless, despite those periodic restrictions, Sweden immigration policy has largely remained very liberal in comparison to many European countries (see Geddes, 2003). The Chapter further highlights how, Swedish immigration policy has now become more or less harmonised with other EU countries. This followed Sweden's entry into the EU in 1995.

With respect to Swedish integration policy, some policies were modified and others were dropped all together, over the years, depending on the prevailing circumstances in the country. One example related to pre-1997 integration policy adopted in 1975 which was found divorced from reality because of its 'over- ambitiousness' (see above). By contrast, the current integration policy emphasises individual rights and responsibilities whilst accommodating the rights of groups in society.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the methodological framework of the research. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section encapsulates the procedures followed in conducting the research. It focuses on the research methodology, methods, sampling strategy and the data collection processes involved. The second section deals with the steps taken to analyse the research data, as well as, the analytic approach employed (i.e., thematic analysis).

The procedures taken in conducting the research and its subsequent analysis would be discussed in the sequence in which they appear. Nonetheless, it was not lost to this research that total or rigid adherence to a *sequence* in social research was, without doubt, a futile exercise. The main reason being that what we as social scientists often deal with are human being, their issues, and concomitant complexities. Consequently, many of the steps involved occurred concurrently and not separately (e.g., data collection and analysis). They were also mutually interconnected and not *sequential*. Take for example, the choice of methodology and methods – where the former had a direct bearing on the latter and vice versa. In other words, one can hardly treat methodology in isolation of methods, sampling strategy, etc, hence, their interconnectedness.

The process of carrying this research constituted practical steps that were to be realised. It started with a pilot study involving three Somalis from Sweden in Birmingham, UK. The sole intent of this pilot was not so much about focusing on the subject matter as such, but rather as a way to 'perfect the tool' of research. Thanks to this tiny pilot, the researcher was able to make final amendments to the initial order and sequence of questions in the first interview schedule/guide, employed to interview individual Somalis respondents in Stockholm.

Data collection itself proceeded in three stages. The first stage involved interviews with individual Somali research respondents. There were twenty-eight persons involved in this first stage. They comprised of nineteen men and nine-women. Sampling here was arrived through snowballing. Snowballing meant the researcher had no fixed venue. This was because, where and who to interview were partly contingent upon recommendations from persons already interviewed. The second stage involved interviews with ten Swedish officials who corroborated, and acted as a counterweight to the accounts given by individual Somali respondents. The third and concluding phase entailed a focus group interview involving eight Somalis considered as knowledgeable about the current situation of Somalis in Sweden.

4.1 Qualitative Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research methodology is appropriate in studying people and their social world (see Bryman, 2001; Grix, 2004; Morgan & Smircich, 1980). It enables researchers to delve into people's social and cultural life, as well as, focus on the '*details of human life*' (Payne & Payne, 2004:176). Through qualitative methods, social scientists are thus able to acquire a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be the case had they relied purely on quantitative research (Silverman, 2000:8).

Qualitative methodology and method(s) were deemed appropriate for this research for a number of reasons. Firstly, the research entailed studying sensitive topics (e.g., personal issues) and a socially excluded minority groups (whose access is not always easy). Hence the choice of interviewing (including focus group interviewing) as the preferred method for gathering the information the research sought (see 'Methods' below). Secondly, given the size of the sample (which was small), a 'well-grounded, rich descriptions, and explanations' of the topic of inquiry (i.e., the integration of Somalis in Sweden) could only be possible if qualitative research methods were deployed (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994:1; see Arber, 2001). Thirdly, qualitative methods was considered appropriate for this research since they were better predisposed in helping the researcher 'preserve the chronological' flow of events, activities, actions, etc, that a process such as integration of immigrants entails (Miles & Huberman, 1994:11). The reasons are explored in more details, below.

4.1.1 Studying sensitive topics and minorities

Qualitative methods are the most appropriate strategy for studying sensitive topics and minorities. This research was dealing with a sensitive topic and a minority group. As the collected data was to demonstrate, they contained many private or sensitive personal issues emerged – issues respondents were willing to share with the researcher only after the latter gained their trust. These involved, for example, people's personal and emotional feelings, beliefs, inner-thoughts, behaviour, their sense of self, etc.

The topic of Somali integration itself entailed personal and painful journeys for the individual Somali interviewees concerned. Discernible were disappointments; a clear struggle of up-and-downs with many bracing themselves against prejudices and discrimination on an almost daily basis; an environment that was not always socially and culturally empathetic to them, etc. 'Hopelessness' also characterise the reality of many Somalis in Sweden since many are unemployed (see Carlsson & Rooth, 2006). It was easy in such circumstances for people to turn inwards and become suspicious to 'outsiders'. It is the contention of this researcher, therefore, that researchers using quantitative techniques would find access to groups like Somalis 'problematic', than those qualitative techniques.

4.1.2 The Choice of Samples

The appropriateness of qualitative research also came to bear when it came to decisions on sampling and sampling type this research had to adopt. Ultimately, it was the size of sample – which was small – that was decisive, hence, the decision to opt for a non-probability *purposeful* sampling as opposed to a *probability* sampling (where individuals in the population have equal chance of being selected). Indeed, because this research was dealing with a minority community (Somalis in Sweden), the researcher was conscious of the fact that there were ‘no adequate lists to use as sampling frames’ that are always ‘readily available’ when dealing with them (see Arber, 2001:58-82). Moreover, as a minority group, Somali in Sweden may feel vulnerable and excluded from mainstream society. Because of this vulnerability and exclusion, Somalis were likely to become suspicious of researchers – i.e., as people who wield power directly or indirectly over others. Again this underscored the appropriateness of qualitative research methodology as a means to ‘enter’ the social world and or ‘realities’ of minority groups like Somalis. This research presupposes this ‘entering of social world or reality’ would not, therefore, have been forthcoming had this research used anything other than qualitative methodology. Procedures such as surveys were thus considered technical, impersonal, and anonymous – and unlikely to tap into the richness and in-depth understandably associated with qualitative research. Thanks to the use of qualitative methods, this research was able to employ procedures or techniques Somalis as a minority group were at ease with.

4.1.3 Preserving the chronological flow of events

As Miles & Huberman (1994:11) confirm, qualitative methodology ‘preserves the chronological flow of events’ where researchers ‘can see precisely which event leads to which consequences’, and hence, ‘derive fruitful explanations’ for their research. In reference to this research, one was able to observe some chronological flow of events as pertains to Somali refugees in Sweden. This research saw how that chronology began with the appearance of Somalis into the Swedish scene in the early 1990s and how their introduction and subsequent attempts to ‘incorporate’ them into Swedish society was literally sequential, at least on the surface. For many Somalis in Sweden, the norm was to start life in a refugee reception centre or a *camp*, as conventionally referred to. The next stage came when they were granted work and residence permits (*PUT*) and subsequently moved to the communes or municipalities that ‘accepted’ them. This was the stage where ‘real’ life in Sweden begun for Somalis.

Through this flow of chronology, this research was able to observe how many Somalis had to start their ‘lives in Sweden’ literally from scratch. What was also observable from the accounts of Somalis were their expectations, progress (for some) and the fall-out (for others) as they proceeded in their integration process. Indeed, as a matter of official procedure, Somalis, like other newcomers into Sweden, were expected (which many did) to invest considerably, in terms of time and efforts, in attaining an ‘acceptable’ level of proficiency in the Swedish language from the outset. These individuals would then proceed to educate or ‘re-educate’ themselves depending, among other factors, on their previous educational

backgrounds and motivations. Having attained some form of education, Somalis were then able to avail themselves of labour market opportunities.

4.2 The Research Process

This sub-section will run us through the following: a brief account of the pilot study the researcher undertook prior to venturing into the field; sampling and the sampling strategy adopted in this research and the data collection process (including the main methods of investigation i.e., interviewing and focus group interviewing) used in this research.

4.2.1 The Pilot Study

A pilot study is more or less ‘an abbreviated version of the research project’ (Dane, 1990:42). It prepares the research to try out in advance some of the ‘procedures’ or techniques to ‘use in the subsequent full-scale project’ (Dane, 1990:42). It helps, among others, to identify eventual flaws that may exist in the measuring instruments (Kidder & Judd, 1986). It was that element of ‘practice’ as well as the ‘identification’ of ‘eventual flaws’ in the initial interview schedule of this research, prior to its subsequent employment that led this researcher to undertake a pilot study.

This research piloted its study on three Somalis in Birmingham, UK. Two of these Somalis, a man (aged 43) and a woman (aged 30) had relocated to Birmingham from Sweden, while the other, a man (aged 25) was on a visit from Sweden. None of these were related to one another. Nonetheless, all these three Somalis had similar experiences to those whom the researcher had wanted to study in Sweden.

The rationale for the pilot study arose out of the uncertainties that lingered about the initial interview schedule that was constructed. They included, above all, ‘how’ the questions were framed and their sequence. There were also doubts that surrounded how potential participants would respond to the questions. Were the questions in the interview schedule appropriate? Would they yield enough answers (data) for subsequent analysis? These uncertainties led the researcher to pilot the research before embarking on the data collection process proper.

Having decided upon the pilot, the next step was to gain access to potential respondents. Although only a few pilot respondents were sought, this was not as straightforward as initially anticipated. Indeed, it only materialised after making numerous visits to areas where a number of Somalis lived in the City of Birmingham. Moreover, one had to rely on the recommendations of people who knew people who could be living in Birmingham but have since relocated from Sweden. In the end, a meeting with one pilot respondent led to the other, and so on – similar to the snowball sampling the research had to rely on, albeit on a miniature scale (see below on ‘snowballing’).

As alluded to previously, the aim of the pilot was to test how effective the constructed interview schedule would work in the ‘real world’, i.e., in the field. The research was, thus, less keen on identifying potential issue or themes – that could emerge (and indeed, they did) – from the pilot and incorporate them to the main body of the research. The pilot, as it were, was only limited to the testing of procedures.

Accordingly, this research used the pilot only as means to perfect its ‘measuring instruments’, i.e., the interview schedule (and subsequent interview guides and Aide memoires) employed in the first data set (i.e., interviews involving individual Somali research respondents). It also provided this researcher with hints about what to expect and how to use these with potential research respondents.

Overall, the pilot study, despite its tiny size, was instrumental in helping the researcher adjust the initial set of topical questions/interview schedule and in changing the initial order and sequence of those questions. Moreover, certain ambiguities in the wording of the questions (especially where such wordings or questions were perceived or construed to mean something else than they were originally intended for) were eliminated. It is noteworthy that due to time and financial constraint, more potential respondents could not be involved in the pilot study.

4.2.2 Sampling and Sampling Strategy

One important research strategy was to select a sample from the population (i.e., Somali immigrants in Sweden) that could provide the maximum theoretical understanding for the topic of inquiry (i.e., the integration of Somalis in Sweden). Sampling was important since it encompassed the questions of access and selection of research participants. Thus, the two important questions in relation to sampling in this research were: How did the research get its access to the population it sought to study? In what ways did the research select its sample from the overall ‘target’ population?

As one would appreciate, ‘sampling frames’ (i.e., list of members of the population under investigation) are usually not readily obtainable in minority groups (see Arber, 2001:60). In the same vein, obtaining a sample representative of the population of this research’s focus was virtually impossible – leading the researcher to adopt a sampling type that was purposive (non-probability) as opposed to probability based.

To distinguish between purposive (non-probability) and probability sampling we turn to Arber (2001). According to Arber (2001:61), ‘probability sampling is where every individual element in the population is chosen at random and has a known, non-zero chance of selection’. In this sampling type, the ‘selection process is predetermined’, and ‘once the units have been selected the goal is to collect data from them’ (Arber, 2001:61). On the other hand, in purpose

sampling (also called non-probability sampling), ‘the chance of selection for each element in a population is unknown and for some elements is zero’ (Arber, 2001:61).

4.2.2.1 Choosing Snowball Sampling

In the end, this research settled for a sampling technique called *snowball*. Bryman (2001:508) defines snowball sampling as ‘a non-probability sample’ in which the researcher makes ‘initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others’. This resonates with Burgess (1984:55) who argues, snowballing involves ‘using a small group of informants who are asked to put the researcher in touch with their friends who are subsequently interviewed, then asking them about their friend and interviewing them until a chain of informants has been selected’. Lincoln & Guba (1985), provide a similar definition. They state, ‘in this form of sampling one identifies, in whatever way one can, a few members of the phenomenal group one wishes to study’(Lincoln & Guba, 1985:233). These members are used to identify others, who in turn identify others’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:233).

Snowballing is said to continue until the researcher reaches the point where the selection of new individuals or material adds no more substantive contribution to the sample at hand. As Lincoln & Guba (1985:233) confirm, ‘unless the group is very large one soon comes to a point

at which efforts to net additional members cannot be justified in terms of the additional outlay of energy and resources; this point may be thought of as a point of redundancy’.

In this research, ‘snowballing’ was chosen because it was viewed as the most appropriate method of obtaining samples from Somalis who were ‘numerically a small group’ (cf. Arber, 2001:63). Also, in agreement with Arber (2001:63), snowballing was chosen because it was ‘the main feasible method of finding a sample’ where the potential subjects of research were likely to be ‘sceptical of the intentions of the researcher’ – as attested in this research (see ‘Reflexivity’ relating to the ‘encounter with Somali respondents’, below).

4.2.2.2 Applying the Snowball Technique

This researcher’s snowballing technique did commence with a few Somalis acquaintances that the researcher requested to volunteer for interviews. This research also relied on personal recommendations from friends and their acquaintances. When somebody was identified, the researcher got in touch with him or her to arrange for an interview. Once interviewed, the interviewee would be asked if s/he knew anyone (a friend or a relative) who would volunteer for a similar interview. The same questions were used each time and the approach proceeded in subsequent interviews until this research got an adequate number of interviewees (Arber, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Burgess, 1984).

It is important to note, however, that the snowballing technique has some limitations that were deliberately set, in order to achieve maximum variability among the people studied and the data this research sought to collect. To attain maximum variability, this snowball sample had to reflect as far as possible the entire Somali population in Stockholm in terms of such variables as age, sex, education, work, number of years in Sweden, etc. Indeed, snowballing continued until the research was certain that it had enough data to cover certain cohorts in the population and then move on to other type of people in the quest of attaining maximum variation in data. Maximum variability should not, however, be confused with representativeness. Being qualitative research, and given the choice and size of sampling, this research was not representative in a quantitative sense.

Nonetheless, the quest for maximum variability in the sample was not without glitches. One particular problem encountered related to the gaining access to [potential] female respondents. Indeed, it became apparent, for example, that attaining the same proportions or numbers of female and male respondents became difficult. The main reason for this difficulty relates to cultural sensibilities when it came to Somali women, to which the researcher was aware. Accordingly, the researcher was obliged to negotiate access in a way that was 'acceptable' to the values of ('majority of') Somalis when access to Somali women was sought. The reason why only nine out of the twenty-eight Somali research respondents were women was, for example, precisely because of the cultural restrictions 'placed' on male researchers (as this researcher was).

4.3 The Data Collection Process

The data collection phase of this research proceeded in three stages. The first stage involved individual interviews conducted with twenty-eight Somalis (consisted of nineteen men and nine-women). Here the study targeted people aged between 18 and 55. The second stage in data collection involved interviewing ten Swedish officials, seven at local (commune) level and three at national level. The third and last stage involved a focus group interview conducted with eight Somalis, whom the researcher believed were knowledgeable about the current situation of Somalis in Sweden.

4.3.1 Methods

Interviewing was the main method for gathering data in this research. There were two types of interviews employed. The first was semi-structured interviews (with Somali research respondents), and the second, structured interviews (with Swedish officials). These various sources of interviewing methods were highly complementary to one another in elucidating the accounts about the experiences and perception of Somalis, and experiences and perceptions of others (e.g., Swedish officials) about Somalis (and their integration) in Sweden. Separately deployed was a focus group interview (with eight Somalis) that played an important supplementary role in the data collection process (see below).

4.3.1.1 Data Collection: First Stage

This research gathered interviews from twenty-eight Somalis, nineteen of whom were men and nine were women. On the average, interviews with individual Somali research participants lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, with the exception of two, that each took two hours. This research wanted these interviews to be perceived as a ‘*conversation with purpose*’, which meant engaging individual Somali research participants in ‘dialogue-like conversations’ rather than interviews *per se* (Burgess, 1984:102).

Before an interview began, the ‘potential’ interviewee would be asked if s/he still wished to participate – even with the full knowledge that the person was part of a sample that was arrived at through snowballing, and with the assurances from his/her friend(s) to whom interviewees sometimes had more confidence and respect, than they would presumably for the researcher. Having solicited an agreement and committed participants to sign a consent form (see Appendix 3), the researcher explained (to respondents) the aims of the interview and the overall purpose of conducting the research. The researcher then spelt out the intentions about tape-recording the interviews and discussed that with the respondents (for ‘ethical considerations’, see Appendix 4).

Next in line was to give a short explanation of the ‘agenda’ of topics (or *Aide Mémoire*) that had to be covered with the interviewee. There was no requirement on the part of the

interviewer and the interviewed to cover all topics. Nonetheless, the researcher tried to ‘squeeze in’ as many as topics and questions that were possible depending on how much time was left for that particular interview session.

The *Aide Mémoire* was a shortened version of the initial interview schedule. It contained a set of themes and topics that were used to form questions in the course of conversation. This gave the respondents the opportunity to develop their answers outside a structured format. Thus, informants had a relatively high degree of involvement and spontaneity in constructing their social world together with the researcher. Nonetheless, the researcher had to intervene from time to time when an informant veered away from the topics under discussion. After all, the interview was a ‘conversation with purpose’!

The decision to opt for *Aide Mémoire* rather than an interview schedule was borne out of the experience gained from the small pilot study interviews as well as the first initial sets of interviews conducted in the field. The reasons were twofold. First, the interview schedule contained too much detail. Trying to cover as many topics as possible within the allotted time limit (around one hour or an hour and half), proved futile as a result. Second, the interview schedule had the potential effect of putting more ‘structure’ into the interviews which meant there was less room for spontaneity and in-depth account of issues to be discussed (cf. Burgess, 1984:102). For more about the *Aide Mémoire* of this research (see Appendix 5).

4.3.1.2 Data Collection: Second Stage

Interviews conducted with the ten Swedish officials constituted the second stage of the data collection process of this research. The rationale was to use the data collected from officials to supplement, complement and corroborate the data collected from Somali informants. Moreover, it was felt perception and experience of these officials would be invaluable in that they could provide a counter-weight to the views expressed by Somali research respondents.

Initially, the plan was to identify and select officials from various departments/actors charged (directly or indirectly) with the facilitation of immigrant integration in Sweden. However, as it turned out, many officials (five out of ten) came from the same borough in Stockholm, namely, Rinkeby (see Appendix 2, for map). For whatever shortcomings, such a concentration on one area may have entailed, Rinkeby had some uncontested advantages. First, it is in Rinkeby where a relatively sizeable population of Somali in Stockholm lives. It is, therefore, in Rinkeby where most experience and knowledge about Somalis would be available. Secondly, it was in Rinkeby where access to the officials was most forthcoming in comparison to other local administrations in Stockholm, in part thanks to the researcher's own previous knowledge about Rinkeby and his contacts there. Access to the officials was originally sought, informally, through the researcher's own 'contacts' (e.g., through former work colleagues), and, formally, through correspondence, telephone and e-mail.

4.3.1.2.1 Access to Officials

The researcher contacted a sectional head in Rinkeby Social District (Rinkeby SDF) through e-mail and informed her (the manager) of the intentions of carrying out research involving Somali refugees in the Stockholm metropolitan region. In the pursuits of doing so, the researcher told this manager he needed to talk to some officials in order to solicit their perspectives on the integration of Somalis in Sweden. After more additional correspondences, the Sectional Head was able to inform the researcher that four persons in her organisation volunteered for the impending interviews. She also provided the researcher with the names and contacts of these officials. The officials were subsequently contacted and they gave their consent to be interviewed. The researcher subsequently travelled to Stockholm to conduct interviews with the four Rinkeby officials as an initial step.

Whilst in Rinkeby, the researcher was informed of another official who was willingly to volunteer for an interview. She too was interviewed. That brought the total number of ‘official’ interviewees to five. The next move was to gain access to other officials from other districts. That meant contacting other acquaintances. Consequently, two acquaintances, one in Skärholmen, the other in Märsta were interviewed (see Appendix 6 and Appendix 7, for maps, respectively). Through another acquaintance, the researcher was also able to get in touch, and, subsequently interview two officials from the Migration Office in Solna (see Appendix 8, for maps). It is worth noting that the two officials from the Migration Office had previously worked in Rinkeby, and hence, had an experience of directly working with Somali clients.

Most challenging, however, was access to officials from the Swedish Integration Office (SIO). Many of the requests for an interview made to SIO remained unanswered. It took almost a year before access to interview an official from the Integration Office was gained. SIO was located in Norrköping, about 135 KM west of Stockholm (see Appendix 9 for the Map of Sweden). For more on Swedish ‘official’ respondents, see Appendix 10.

In all the cases, the researcher asked officials to check with their line managers if it was acceptable for them to volunteer for the interviews. All reassured the researcher that they did precisely that and had no problems in meeting to talk to him (the researcher). The researcher was also able to take great consolation in the relatively vast autonomy accorded to Swedish officials in not only structuring their work, but also the relative independence of their line managers in contrast to their counterparts in many parts of the world.

There were a number of possible reasons why Swedish officials enjoy relative autonomy from their ‘managers’. One observation resulted from the fact that authority and decision making within the public sector hierarchies and bureaucracies tend to be more ‘horizontal’ than ‘vertical’. Second, decentralisation in Sweden seems more pervasive since every commune tends to govern itself independently of the central government. Third, the relative influence of labour unions and labour laws in Sweden guarantee expanded rights for Swedish workers than their counterparts in many part of the world. Fourth and more importantly, Swedish welfare state interventions aim to erode visible class differences in comparison to many other

countries may have contributed to a tradition of ‘equality’ and shared responsibilities among all cadres in Swedish workplaces.

4.3.1.2.2 Structured Interviews with Officials

The interviews with Swedish officials were structured. The use of a structured interview format here ensued from the intention to use the accounts solicited from individual Somali participants as the basis for discussions with Swedish officials. Accordingly, from the outset, the researcher would let officials know that what they were about to talk about was based on accounts gathered from individual Somali participants interviewed in Stockholm. For the purpose of clarity, the researcher went through a list of points with these officials before the interview commenced.

Among others, officials were notified that many questions/statements in the areas (themes) to be covered were based on the subjective interpretation of the Somali participants interviewed; many of the accounts to be explored bordered on ‘gross generalisation’; many questions were in the form of a statements in which the officials would be require to comment (if they may); many of the questions could simply be answered by ‘no’ and ‘yes’, but the researcher would require them to elaborate (it was hoped more information would be forthcoming through probing and prompting); and, some questions could be outside the official’s specific area of duty or responsibility in which case the official would not be obliged to answer or respond

(although s/he were free to offer a view where possible). Finally, the researcher was insistent that he was no expert, and that it would be ‘they’ together – the researcher and the official – who would attempt to construct what could be regarded as the ‘accurate’ situation/reality of Somalis in Stockholm/Sweden.

4.3.1.3 Data Collection: Third Stage

The last and final stage of data collection entailed the use of a focus group interview. The focus group involved eight male participants whom the researcher believed were knowledgeable about the current situation of Somalis in Sweden. This assessment was based on four grounds. First, all these participants spent a considerable amount of time in Sweden and were ‘fairly’ integrated into Swedish society. Second most of these participants had direct dealings with Swedish authorities (some of whom were public servants). Third, most of the participants were engaged in some form of advocacy (often at individual levels, but also at group levels, i.e., as members of Somali ethnic organisations) in advancing the integration of Somalis in Sweden. Fourth, all the participants had a good reputation or standing in the Somali community at Stockholm. Before we dwell further, let us define the term *focus group*.

A focus group (also referred to as *focus group interview*) is a ‘particular type of interview’ – a group interview – on a specific topic; hence, where the ‘focus’ comes from (Robson, 2002:284). Two ‘core’ elements usually associated with focus groups are: (a) ‘a moderator

who sets the stage with prepared questions or an interview guide'; and, (b) 'the goal of eliciting participants' feelings, attitudes and perceptions about a selected topic' (Vaughn *et al.*, (1996 as cited in Puchta & Potter, 2004:6). Simply put, a focus group meeting is a discussion in which a small group of people under the guidance of a facilitator or moderator talk about a topic selected for investigation (Howard *et al.*, (1989 as cited in Fallon, 2002).

To Morgan (1997:20, as cited in Puchta & Potter, 2004:74), the essence of a focus group is the 'bringing together of attitudes, opinions, and experiences of members'. In so doing researchers have three objectives in mind: (a) to find out what respondents think about an issue, (b) how they think the issue, and, (c) why they think the way they do about the issue.

4.3.1.3.1 Original aim changes midway into research

As noted previously, although the focus group interview was not the main primary source of evidence in this research, it nonetheless played an important supplementary role. Originally, this research intended to use the focus group members as a sort of panel that could arbitrate between individual Somali interviewees and Swedish official. This was because the research envisaged a situation where the two groups would perceive many issues regarding the topic of inquiry (the integration of Somalis in Sweden) in different ways. This did not occur in practice. This research did not find most officials 'confrontational' or dismissive in any significant way – though, admittedly, there were a minority of officials with differing

discourses. In most cases the two data sets – accrued from individual Somali participants and Swedish officials respectively, – mostly confirmed and or reinforced each other. What does this tell us, then? It tells us that social phenomenon or reality is not linear but more complex – certainly, contrary to what this research hitherto envisaged.

Thanks to the flexibility often associated with qualitative research, the researcher had no difficulty in figuring out how to re-orientate the focus group interview. The research had already committed itself to use focus group interview as part of his data collection methods and to drop it at such an advanced stage was deemed unwise. Ultimately, the focus group interview was used as a way to amplify and understand areas in the preceding data sets that may have seemed obscure and diffuse (cf. Evason & Whittington (1997 as cited in Robson, 2002:287). Example of these areas included ‘policy’ (e.g., in the case of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘integration’ which were interpreted differently) and certain ‘cultural and religious’ issues (that sounded controversial and needed highlighting). To a lesser extent, the focus group interview was used to shed light into some (few) areas where the research believed individual Somali interviewees and Swedish officials seemed to disagree.

4.4 Reflexivity

This Sub-section deals with many ‘methodological issues’ and other ‘unanticipated’ dilemmas that surfaced during my encounters with the research respondents (cf. Thapar-Björkert, 1999:57). In particular, it deals with the impact my background/biography may have had on the research process and data collection. Above all, it highlights the opportunities and obstacles my identity/status as a researcher may have presented when interacting with different respondents (i.e., from both the Swedish and Somali communities) and vice versa.

I would argue that I was in a unique position to do this research since I could be viewed as an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’ by both the Somali respondents and the Swedish officials. To Somalis I was often seen as an ‘insider’ doing research on his own community. However, I was also treated with some suspicion (‘outsider’) by some members of this community because of my wish to interview Somali women respondents, where my identity/status as a [Somali] male researcher may have impacted on this research.

To Swedish officials I was an ‘insider’, in the sense that I was a ‘former colleague’, having worked as a social worker in Stockholm before I embarked on my PhD studies in the UK. I was also seen as an ‘outsider’ who was ‘othered’ by other factors (e.g., unequal power relationships, belonging to an ethnic minority group, etc).

4.4.1 My 'Insider' Status

I was, in general, first and foremost, an 'insider' when it came to my encounters with Somali research respondents. The reason was because I shared common language, ethnic, cultural and religious background. Secondly, and most importantly, I shared more or less the same 'lived' experience of the majority of the Somalis respondents I interviewed, in that I too was an immigrant (and a 'former refugee') who underwent the same integration process as they did. I also related to the stories they told about their own integration processes with regard to work, education, discrimination and 'culturally-related' 'divergence' with the host society.

Indeed, like most Somalis I started my life in Sweden as a refugee. I spent some time on a refugee reception centre whilst I waited for a decision from the Migration Board on my asylum application. When I was finally granted a resident permit, I had to move to a commune where I was able to receive my 'introduction' into society with regards to Swedish language courses, education and accommodation.

For me, as was for many of Somali respondents, the process of integration was fraught with many difficulties. To begin with, I missed a great deal of the 'things' I took for granted before arriving in Sweden. I missed the familiarity and the secure environment among family, friends, culture, etc., and was cast into a new environment with other sets of requirements/demands. I had to learn a new language and culture. Soon I was to discover that

the education and work experience I accrued outside Sweden was not easily transferable to meet the requirements of the new environment. Like many Somalis, I had to endure a long spell of unemployment period. I also encountered a fare share of negative experiences such as prejudices and discrimination in Swedish society. These varied, from prejudiced comments to the ‘denial’ to jobs that I was qualified to do by recruiters.

The ‘milestone’ in my own integration process occurred when I supplement my previous education (accrued abroad) in order to bring it in line with Swedish equivalent. This in turn enabled me to secure my first job (in Sweden) as a social worker in Stockholm. In the next couple of years I continued to work as a social worker in a number of social districts. I also managed to acquire a postgraduate degree in social work which enabled me to deepen my understanding of social work theory and practice in Sweden.

4.4.2 The Encounter with Somali Respondents

As I alluded to, my ‘insider’ status/identity as a Somali researcher may have had an impact on this research in a number of ways. Firstly, I observed that there was a ‘sense of enthusiasm’ among some Somali respondents in the way they responded and related to me and my research. Secondly, I detected a certain amount of ‘suspicion’ among some respondents that might not have occurred if the researcher had been of non-Somali extraction. As a consequence, I had to discover that research was more about ‘negotiation’ – a negotiation which enabled me to navigate through the potential hitches that could either draw me too close to my respondents (because of their enthusiastic response) or away (because of hostilities and suspicion towards me and my research). In addition, thanks to my ‘insider’ status, I was able to make use of influential ‘gatekeepers’ – i.e. those ‘pivotal persons’ within the Somali community who were willing to offer help when I met hurdles in obtaining data. Again as alluded to earlier, the ‘insider’ status was not ‘fixed’ or ‘static’ (Thapar-Björkert, 1999:65; see Hayden, 2009). I discovered this with my relationship with Somali women respondents where I encountered certain problems, e.g., the problem of limited access and constraints imposed as a result of cultural and religious ‘demands’.

4.4.2.1 A Sense of Enthusiasm

My background (as Somali) meant some respondents received me and my research not only cordially but also with some sense of enthusiasm. This was noted both at the stage when ‘access’ to respondents was sought and at the ‘interviews’. One example of this ‘sense of enthusiasm’ was the significant number of Somalis who contacted me because they were very keen to be ‘interviewed’. These Somalis had heard about impending or ongoing interviews from their friends or relatives. They would call (often through their friends) and say they had ‘something’ to ‘share’ with me. Nonetheless, whilst a few were included through my ‘snowball’ sample, it was not possible to accommodate everyone who wanted to participate. Indeed, I often struggled to get the ‘right’ people in terms of age, sex, etc., in my quest to achieve maximum ‘variability’. Accordingly, I had to declining to interview those who did not fit into the precise categories of people wanted for interviews.

This ‘enthusiasm’ also generated a high expectation about this research, especially, amongst the ‘less well educated’ interviewees. Some of these interviewees wanted me to take onboard certain ‘concerns’ and discuss these with respective authorities. These interviewees could only be reassured that the research would come up with some recommendations. Nonetheless, I made it clear this research (and I) had no influence whatsoever on officials or policy makers. Moreover, because I was regarded as an ‘insider’ (‘as one of us’), some respondents were able to confide in me about sensitive issues from time to time in the course of the interviews. Indeed, I had to strike a balance, knowing when and where to stop whilst being courteous.

This was necessary given the time constraints involved. After all, the goal of this research was to make the interviews ‘a conversation with purpose’ (see Burgess, 1984).

4.4.2.2 Suspicion

My encounter with Somalis aroused not only a ‘sense of enthusiasm’, but also generated a certain amount of ‘suspicion’ towards me and my research among some respondents. Many of these ‘suspicions’ revolved around my ‘intentions’ and the fact that some people were reluctant to share what they considered to be ‘private’. Others were defensive at the beginning of the interviews but ‘opened up’ as the interviews progressed. More personal forms of ‘suspicion’ were also encountered. One incident was particularly noteworthy. It involved a female respondent who invited me to her family apartment, to conduct an interview. I was accompanied by an acquaintance who initially helped arrange the interview. After initial greetings that included the husband of the ‘would-be’ respondent, I was ushered into the kitchen, to conduct the interview. The respondent’s husband (who was briefed in advance about the interview) took a seat next to his wife (the respondent). Realising that the man intended to stay put, I had to intervene. This man was informed that the intention was to interview his wife alone as she had consented through my acquaintance, previously. Although the man agreed to leave so that his wife could be interviewed alone, one could still sense a great deal of suspicion and uneasiness on his part towards me as a *male* researcher.

4.4.2.3 Research as being about Negotiation

Thanks to my ‘insider’ role among Somalis, I was in a good position to reassure potential respondents about my intentions as a researcher. My ‘insider’ status helped me to ‘read’ the mood of the individual, regarding potential hesitation, hostility or friendliness towards me and my research. This ‘ability’ was useful both when acquaintances introduced me to persons who could volunteer for an interview and also in the course of interviews themselves. On one hand there were those you would associate such traits as perplexity, suspicion, fear, pensiveness, reluctance, etc. On the other hand, there were those who showed expressions that were the opposite (they were jovial and friendly – i.e., showed a sense of enthusiasm). All these psychological traits or expressions were ‘readable’ on the faces of people. Thus, I knew when to press for an interview or to ‘lie low’ or simply withdraw altogether.

4.4.2.4 The Role of ‘Pivotal Gatekeepers’

Thanks to my role as an ‘insider’, I was able to identify ‘pivotal gatekeepers’, people who held important leverage in the Somali community in Stockholm and who could offer a ‘helping hand’ when I needed. These persons were particularly pivotal while sampling was in progress. For example, when a potential informant was not forthcoming for one reason or another, I would ask these individuals – the ‘pivotal gatekeepers’ – to find out what was happening, not least because they were often acquainted with my potential interviewees. With the help of these ‘pivotal gatekeepers’ one was able to interview many of those who were reluctant to be

interviewed at first. They were also decisive in helping identify the focus group interviewees since they knew those persons who were knowledgeable about Somalis in Sweden (see above).

4.4.2.5 The ‘Insider’ Status was not Static

As observed, I was an ‘insider’ when it came to Somalis in general, by virtue of being a Somali. Nonetheless, this ‘insider’ status/identity was more complex than I had originally anticipated. As I found out, it was more than simple commonalities with respondents, e.g., sharing the same ethnicity, nationality, culture or religion. Indeed, one could argue that my ‘insider’ status with Somalis may have been limited mainly to Somali male respondents since I share more commonality with them than I did with Somali female respondents. This was clearly demonstrated by the differing ways in which I was able to negotiate access with Somali males vis-à-vis Somali female research respondents.

Two reasons may have made me an ‘outsider’ when it came to my encounters with Somali women respondents. First, their ‘lived experience’ was fundamentally different from mine as a Somali male. They were culturally and religiously restricted in their interaction with men. They also suffered a ‘double jeopardy’ being subjected to disadvantages within their own community and the host society – where they encountered ‘oppression’, discrimination, economic disadvantages, and were looked down upon by low virtue of their low status and

limited educational status (see Corra & Kimuna, 2009:1032; Kats, 1982:661). In that sense it could be argued that only a Somali woman could truly understand the full emotional complexities of living as woman among Somalis, and in Sweden. It could also be argued that as a Somali man I was not in a position to ‘identify with’ Somali women and vice versa, and hence, the difficulties in earning their trust. Indeed, I had to work much harder (in the process of the interviews) in order to earn the trust and confidence of Somali female respondents. Moreover, access to Somali female respondents had to be negotiated in a way that was compatible with prevailing Somalian cultural and religious practices.

As it has turned out, all but two women were interviewed in their homes or premises of their own choice – a friend’s or a relative’s home (and often in the residence of other women). Naturally, I was culturally sensitive when it came to interviewing Somali women. Understandably, most Somali women interviewees objected to the idea of being interviewed in a restaurant. Presumably, many of these Somali women were ‘uncomfortable’ to be ‘seen’ together with other men, especially ‘strangers’ (such as researchers) in public places. Many women may also have shied away from situations where other customers could overhear their conversations (i.e., interviews). The seemingly lack of confidence may partly be explained by the social control mechanisms inherent in Somali culture pertaining to gender relations (see Chapter Nine). All in all, I was obliged to negotiate access in a way that was ‘acceptable’ to the values of the ‘majority of’ Somalis when I sought access to interview Somali women.

Another issue of cultural sensitivity pertaining to Somali women was obvious with regard to their objections to tape-recording. Many Somali women (six out of nine) refused their interviews to be tape-recorded. Understandably, they would not let a stranger (a researcher) store these conversations. A one-time encounter was not enough to accord a stranger that privilege, presumably. There could also be cultural reasons, such the fear of disclosure and the repercussions that could entail, and hence their refusal to have their interviews tape-recorded.

4.4.3 The Encounter with Swedish Officials

The majority of officials I interviewed were social workers to whom I was both the ‘insider’ and the ‘outsider’ who came to undertake research. I was an ‘insider’ since as a ‘former’ social worker I was regarded and ‘treated’ as a colleague. I also had a special affinity to social work and social workers since I identified myself professionally with these officials and the profession (social work). Moreover, working as a social worker in Stockholm meant I (like these officials) dealt with the salient issue of immigrant integration on a daily basis. Immigrants are adversely affected by unemployment, inadequate Swedish language skills, living off social assistance and resultant stigmatization. This understanding gave me an ‘edge’ since I had ‘inside’ knowledge about their work, both with immigrants (as they constitute a distinctively disadvantaged group) and with other client groups in Sweden.

Nonetheless, in dealing with Swedish officials, there was no way in which my ‘otherness’ did not intrude (see Thapar-Björkert, 1999:57; Hayden, 2009:81). Indeed, I had to recognize and reflect upon the many differences that ‘othered’ me from the Swedish officials whom I interviewed. First, there existed an unequal power relationship between me and these officials. I belonged to a minority group (that was in many ways excluded) from the mainstream Swedish society, whilst Swedish officials belonged to the majority host society. Second, Swedish officials were associated and ‘represented’ a powerful [welfare] system that often affected the lives of many refugees/immigrants and their integration process in Sweden (to which I was part). In many ways, this was a structure that enabled or erected barriers against those afflicted (refugees/immigrants). In other words, these officials had roles and relative status, prestige and power that often placed them in a ‘higher hierarchal position’ over members of ethnic minorities – to which I belonged (see Thapar-Björkert, 1999:62; Collins, 1998).

Third, there were obvious racial, ethnic, social, economic, cultural, religious and social class differences with Swedish officials. In all, my perceived place in the [Swedish] social structure, i.e., as a member of ethnic minority interlocking with ‘powerful’ respondents from the native majority group) meant that I may have been denied the ability to speak from a ‘position of dominance’ – as researchers ‘usually’ do over their research subjects (see Rosaldo (1989:168-9, as cited in Hayden, 2009:83). These ‘differences’ may have thus impacted upon my ‘positionality’ (identity/status) since their ‘position’ placed them in a superior position in the

hierarchy which I had to attempt to ‘overcome’. (see Hayden, 2009:81; Thapar-Björkert, 1999:62).

4.4.3.1 Interacting with Swedish Officials: An Observation

In spite of my awareness of the unequal power relationship, I still tried to cultivate a relationship that was equal in status with the Swedish officials. And, for most part, this was achieved. My feeling was that power was more or less laterally/horizontally ‘shared’ with the majority of these (Swedish) officials; and, ‘everyone’ seemed to engage with one another without ‘regarding’ the other as ‘inferior’ or ‘superior’ in any way. I also felt confident in my position/role (e.g., as a researcher/colleague) – which was characteristically collegial, yet focused and business-like when dealing with these officials. It was a relationship in which I felt I was receiving confirmation as a ‘serious’ investigator. This is reinforced by the following sentiment from one of the officials:

We do not meet people like you. The people we meet are those who have problems with integrating themselves in society.

Notwithstanding, this research can reveal important observations on the part of Swedish officials, i.e., a series of ‘unconscious’ behaviours that were conveyed to me in the course of data collection. These included the way the officials ‘carried themselves’, their body language, the confidence they exuded and their level of control in the interview situation. One example was the discretion by an official to discontinue an interview due to more ‘important pressing

matters' related to his/her work. All these indicated to me that these officials wielded certain 'power' that was 'visible', which was absent when I conducted interviews with Somali respondents. The way these officials had undertaken certain practical steps prior to the interviews also meant that they had, from the outset, certain 'control' in the way the interviews were to be conducted. They (officials), for example, determined the venue/'environment' where the interviews took place. The meeting usually took place in the official's office or workplace. There was also aura of 'we're in control here' in that it was I who was welcomed and subsequently ushered into their offices. The seating plan was normally predetermined by the official.

Moreover, the venue as well as the interaction seemed all too formal and predictable. There was an aspect of 'formality' in the atmosphere. This can be compared with Somali respondents who were met at different places, where the meeting points were often dictated by other sets of circumstances, such as, the suitability of the venue, the convenience to the interviewee, or whether or not interviews were to take place in their homes or elsewhere.

4.4.3.2 Other Questions

In reflecting on my encounter with Swedish officials, a number of other important questions came to the fore. For example, did I know relatively more about Somalis and some of the issues/topics I raised with the officials because I was a Somali and had the 'lived experience'

of Somalis in Sweden? Could some of the data I collected from the Swedish officials simply turn out to be ‘official accounts’ of events that lacked both ‘personal reflections’ and spontaneity? Could some of the ‘negative’ sentiments about Somalis (and Muslims) in particular and immigrants I obtained from a minority of officials border on xenophobia or Islamophobia?

4.4.3.2.1 Knowing relatively more

There were instances where I felt I had more knowledge about certain areas but where I, nonetheless, listened to what an official had to say on that topic or topics. This was particularly the case when officials deliberated on issues that related to Somali cultural and [Islamic] religious beliefs/practices. The question worth posing here is, whether what they said about particular issues – issues that I felt I was more knowledgeable than my respondents – really mattered? This kind of ethical dilemma resonates with Boudieu’s (1977) first order ‘objectification’ in which the ‘interviewer claims to know more about the interviewee’ when the latter expresses his/her sentiment (see Collins, 2009:3.7).

4.4.3.2.2 Official version

I was sometimes left with a feeling that some Swedish officials gave what could be referred to as ‘official account’ when they responded to certain issues. This dilemma is reinforced by

Bourdieu (1977:37, as cited in Collins, 1998:1.4) who claims officials are ‘likely to provide the interviewer with the “official account”, i.e., ‘what ought to happen rather than what actually does happen’. In some sense these officials may have censored themselves since they were after all bounded by the work they did which often expects them to work according to established procedures and observe non-discriminatory approaches when at work. One reason which made me believe that there was limited spontaneity in their responses was the way in which these officials often pondered and even paused (as if lost in thought) before they provided answers to the question(s) I posed. It was as though, they did not want to say something ‘out of the ordinary’.

Why did these officials hesitate before answering questions rather than responding more spontaneously? A number of questions come to mind. Might these officials have given consideration to my personal feelings, as well as to my ethnic and religious sensibilities? Could they have given prior thought to the possibility that if they said something that might discomfort me, I would probably feel ‘hurt’? Could they have thought that they would come across as ‘intolerant’ if they pursued a harsher judgment about Somalis or other groups in similar position in Sweden? In so doing, could they have suppressed some of their inner feelings that could otherwise have been important to the outcome of this research?

Another issue that comes into mind was the difficulties these officials found themselves when discussing emotive subjects such the integration of refugees like Somalis in Sweden. Sitting in

a public office and expressing negative ideas about Swedish integration and multicultural policy would perhaps be inappropriate for many. The question then is: could these officials have said different things in another context, for example in their private conversations with their friends and families?

4.4.3.2.3 The Dilemma of not responding to 'negative' views

Last but not least, there were instances where I felt that some of the sentiments expressed by certain officials could be interpreted as xenophobic or Islamophobic in nature. Nonetheless, it was a conscious 'ploy' and a 'strategic' stance on my part not to show disapproval of respondents' views or express sentiments that contradicted their accounts whilst interviewing them (see Bourdieu, 1977: 3-9). Indeed, I may have felt uncomfortable with what a respondent might have said, but for the sake of continued engagement with an interviewee, I had to adopt a neutral stance as a way to pursue my goals of attaining the data I sought. The reasons were simple. What were expressed were personal views. My role as a researcher was after all to solicit information and different perspectives (to which negative sentiments were part). Undoubtedly, had I challenged the views these officials expressed (negatively) on certain topics (for example, Somalian culture and religious practices/Islam) these officials might have taken a defensive posturing, and hence, undermined my strategy of remaining neutral as a researcher.

Nevertheless, by not challenging some of views that may have been xenophobic or Islamophobic in nature, it could be said that I was giving the impression that I was ‘agreeing’ with what some officials were saying. The question that came to mind was, was it *appropriate* or *inappropriate* not to challenge some of those sentiments that I felt uncomfortable with at the time? This is analogous to the war reporter who, when faced with reporting a famine or genocide is faced with the ethical dilemma of continuing to film or offering assistance. My decision was not to challenge prejudicial views at the time in accordance with ‘good’ research practice not least because it could have disrupted or extended the interview. These issues have, however, been addressed in my writing up of the research.

4.5 Analysing the Research Data

This section describes thematic analysis –, the analytic method employed–, and the steps taken in analysing the research data. Thematic analysis is defined as a method for ‘identifying’, ‘analysing’ and ‘reporting patterns (themes)’ within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79). It involves ‘searching across a data set’ for recurrent ‘themes’ and ‘repeated patterns of meaning’ as well as ‘issues of potential interest to the research’ in the transcribed data, with the ultimate aim of ‘reporting the content and meaning of patterns (themes) in the data’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006:86; see Boyatzis, 1998).

4.5.1 The Process of Analysis

To reiterate, the qualitative data derived from this research came from a number of sources. The first of these sources were individual interviews with members of the Somali community. These individuals numbered twenty-eight and comprised of nineteen men and nine women. With the exception of seven persons (six women and one man), all the interviews were tape-recorded. All the non-recorded interviews were handwritten. The second source of data came from interviews with ten Swedish officials (seven from local municipal levels and three from the national level). All ten official interviews were tape-recorded. The final source came from a focus group interview involving eight Somali men whom the researcher believed were knowledgeable about the situation of Somalis in Sweden. This session was also tape-recorded. In order to ‘draw valid meaning’ from the data, it had to be analysed (see Miles & Huberman,

1994:1). Analysis for most part entailed achieving ‘coherence’ and ‘structure’ in the data, whilst at the same time ensuring that the accounts in the data were retained (see Ritchie & Spencer, 1994:179). Achieving coherence, structure and valid meaning from the data meant that the data amassed had to undergo numerous processes, viz.: transcription, familiarisation and coding.

4.5.1.1 Transcription

Transcription was one of the first in a myriad of practical steps this research had to undertaken, in order to analysis the data. Indeed, all interviews including the focus group interview were transcribed. The initial strategy was to put ‘everything’ that respondents said, that was conceivably comprehensible, into text, verbatim. As expected, these transcripts lacked coherence and a smooth flow, at least in their very early stage.

In retrospect, one could attribute this ‘incoherence and lack of flow’ to two main points. First was *the nature of interviews*. In general, the less structured a set of data was, the more likely that a ‘lack of coherence and smooth flow’ would surface in the resultant transcripts. The first data set that involved interviews with Somali respondents were less structured since interviewees were often at liberty to say what they wanted within the time frame of those interviews. Second, *the switching from one issue or topic to another* where an interviewee would talk about a particular issue and suddenly switch to another – one that was seemingly

more important and pressing than the one at hand – to buttress his/her original argument. In doing so, interviewees had sometimes the tendency to veer from the meanings and contexts of a given discussion.

Moreover, by putting ‘everything’ verbatim, grammar, punctuations, sentence construction, etc., became a secondary concern. As a result, the transcripts ended up with numerous statements, sentences and meanings that were incomplete. Nevertheless, because transcription(s) had to undergo further changes, this concern for language and ‘lack of coherence and smooth flow’ began to recede, as analysis proceeded.

In concurring with Silverman (2000:149), one could say transcripts lent this research ‘something to start with’. They may have been laborious, boring and or time-consuming, but they offered the researcher something to work with, something tangible, something that kept him busy and focused for weeks and months to come. It was only after all interviews were transcribed that the analysis process was able to proceed to subsequent stages, i.e., familiarisation and coding.

4.5.1.2 Familiarisation

The transcribed data was not only unstructured but bulky and cumbersome. In light of this unwieldiness, it was incumbent, upon the researcher, to familiarise himself with that data. Familiarisation came by ‘reading’ through it ‘repeatedly’; listening to audiotapes from time to time, for clarity purposes; and, paying particular attention to the main ‘recurrent themes’ in the data (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994:179; Braun & Clarke, 2006:79; 86). The reasons why this researcher had to familiarise himself with his data was not different from those described by Ritchie & Spencer (1994). According to Ritchie & Spencer (1994:179), researchers need to familiarise themselves with the range and ‘diversity’ of their data for a number of reasons. Firstly, researchers need to ‘gain an overview’ of material they gather. An overview gives the researcher a hint of how things have developed thus far, and how things may turn out to be later on. Secondly, thanks to familiarisation, researchers form hunches about key issues and emerging themes from the data they look at. Thirdly, familiarisation sets these themes firmly in context – by taking stock and gaining a feel for the material as a whole.

4.5.1.3 Codes and Coding Process

Coding represented the most important analysis stage in this research. Codes connote ‘tags’ assigned to ‘units of meaning’, ‘names’ put on ‘incidents and events’, or, ‘labels’ attached to ‘a section of text’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994:56; 62). They were ‘themes’ or ‘issues’, which

the researcher identified as important in the data for analytic purposes (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79; see King, 1998; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Initially, the analysis of this research was mainly preoccupied in identifying themes in their textual context. These themes were then ‘tagged’ against data segments (i.e., chunks of texts that varied in sizes). What constituted a ‘theme’? Themes were significant words, concepts, phrases or passages in the data that were used as codes (Payne & Payne, 2004, Miles & Huberman, 1994, King, 1998). In line with Miles & Huberman (1994:56), ‘any piece of data’ – a word, a sentence, a paragraph, etc – all became a ‘candidate’ for one or more codes in the analysis of the data.

Coding also involved the process of extracting themes (identified as the same or related with one another) from their original texts and grouping them thematically for further analysis. This process was carried out across and through all the transcripts.

4.5.1.3.1 Developing Thematic Coding

A great deal of the coding process (analysis) of this research was taken up with identifying ‘themes’ that could be ‘labelled’ against a segment of the data. In this research, that process (of coding) developed successively, since data collection occurred in stage (see above). The

first stage commenced after the first data set involving interviews with Somali research participants were transcribed and familiarised with. The process of coding (i.e. identifying ‘themes’ that could be ‘labelled’ against a segment of the data) was then replicated in subsequent data sets, i.e., with interviews involving Swedish officials and the focus group interview, respectively.

Coding in this research was on-going, dynamic and subject to revision, i.e., modification to themes occurred all the time. Whilst some themes were retained, many were further developed in the course of analysis. Yet others had to be discarded in the end. Some of the themes retained for analysis, were the same or similar to *a priori* themes. *A priori* themes constituted the somewhat pre-determined, preliminary set of codes that the researcher imposed on the research. They were often the ‘actual’ subjects covered in the interviews. *A priori* themes, like the research questions, stemmed from the conceptual framework of the topic *integration*. Most of the themes that *emerged* from the data were, however, subject to further development. Nonetheless, those themes that failed to yield sufficient data, after all themes relating to a particular argument or phenomenon have been collated together, were discarded.

In the process of modification, some themes merged to form overarching (main) themes. Others became sub-themes that gave structure and consistency to the stories constructed. Nonetheless, although, many themes became narrower and more specific with analysis (and subsequent interpretation of data), many others retained their relatively broadness. There are

pros and cons. As Crabtree & Miller (1992: 99) noted, adoption of broader themes enable 'large amount of data to be coded rapidly'; 'broader contexts' to be retained; and 'more text for interpretation' becoming accessible to researchers. On the flipside though, using broad categories of codes may 'fail to capture specific meanings' that could add 'uniqueness' and 'richness' to the data (Crabtree & Miller, 1992: 99). Moreover, a given segment could 'contain multiple ideas', to which the adoption of broader themes or codes would be poorly prepared to capture (see Crabtree & Miller, 1992:99).

Naturally, when and where to finish coding was an issue in this research. Here, we took solace in Lincoln & Guba (1985:341), who suggest that coding is 'over' when the analysis becomes 'saturated', i.e., when 'all incidents' are 'classified' and categories', and when there are sufficient numbers of regularities that emerge from the data (see Miles & Huberman (1994:62). This echoes Payne & Payne (2004:36), who argue that 'the iteration' of the qualitative analysis 'continues until the researcher is satisfied that the data has been fully explored and interpreted'.

Thanks to thematic analysis, it was possible to examine, analyse, and interpret each theme across all transcripts. It was also possible to lift data from their original context and rearrange them according to appropriate thematic reference, as well as map and interpret the data as a whole (cf. Ritchie & Spencer, 1994:181).

4.5.1.3.1.1 Using Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen as the appropriate analytic method for analysing the qualitative data of this research. The reasons were twofold. The first related to its flexibility over alternative analytic approaches, e.g., grounded theory and content analysis (to which this researcher has looked into), and, the second, related to its compatibility with this research's ontological and epistemological positions. There is a link between the two factors: the flexibility thematic analysis offered meant it was compatible with the philosophical underpinning of the research.

The ontological and epistemological positions of this research hold that, people, as social actors, cannot be considered as 'external' to their 'reality' (see Bryman, 2001:16). This is because, as social actors, people help in the construction of their 'reality'. This in turn, makes their perceptions, meanings, actions, knowledge, etc, enormously important when attempting to 'reconstruct' that reality through research, i.e., in order to understand their social reality. It is arguable, therefore, that such a 'reality' cannot be fully captured by researcher who opt for alternative ontological and epistemological positions, e.g., objectivists who, by contrast, advocate that 'social phenomena and their meanings exist independent of social actors' (Bryman (2001:16).

The ontological position adopted by this research was constructionism. The task of this research was, therefore, to examine and understand the multiple social constructions of meanings, experiences, perspectives and knowledge of the respondents (social actors) of this research. Thus, from a constructionist ontological viewpoint, this research viewed the ‘reality’ of people as ‘socially constructed’ (Robson, 2002:27; see Morgan & Smircich, 1980). It affirms that people’s ‘perspective, meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced’, not something separable from the individuals (see Burr (1995 as cite in Braun & Clarke, 2006:85).

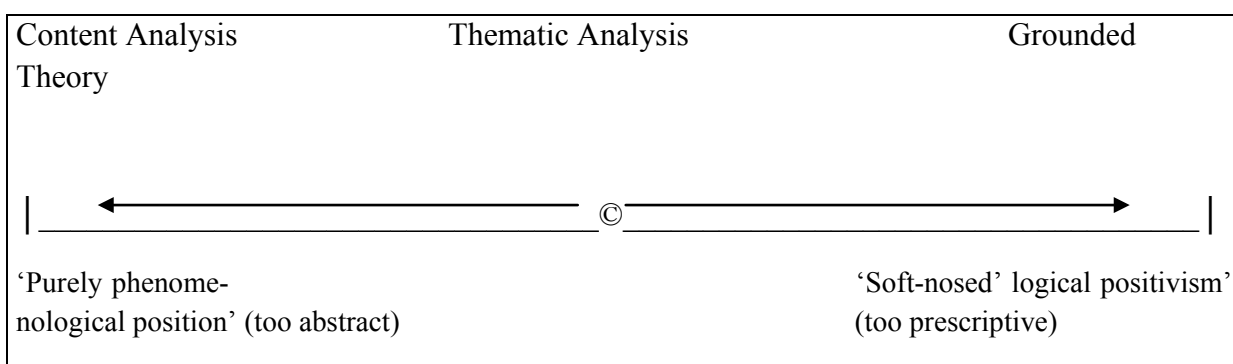
The epistemological position of this research was interpretivism which meant, it preoccupied itself with ‘subjectivity’, ‘understanding’, ‘agency’, and ‘the way people construct their social world’ (see Grix, 2004:82). The way of ‘knowing’ or obtaining knowledge thus proceeded from the ‘subjective’ interpretations of the social actors (Barinaga, 1999:1; Denzin, 1989:27).

4.5.1.3.1.2 Thematic Analysis vis-à-vis Alternative Approaches

Thematic Analysis has advantages over alternative analytic approaches for its flexibility, especially, in comparison to content analysis and grounded theory, hence, its choice for analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998; King, 1998; Crabtree & Miller, 1992). Content analysis is the ‘accepted’ method of investigating’ research data, particularly, in the area of mass media (Joffe & Yardley, 2004:56). In content analysis, all codes are

predetermined and their distribution in a given text, or series of images, are analysed statistically (King, 1998:26). In grounded theory, by contrast, there are no predetermined *a priori* definitions of codes. Note in the analysis of this research, some *a priori* themes were retained and coded against segments of the research data as were emergent themes. Following King (1998), content analysis was considered too abstract whilst grounded theory, too technical, and prescriptive to use.

Figure 4.1: Flexibility of Thematic Analysis



Source: Developed as part of this study. Courtesy: Adapted partly from the descriptions of King (1998) and Miles & Huberman (1984).

For illustrative purposes, we decided to represent graphically the position of the thematic analysis approach in relation to content analysis and grounded theory (i.e., two main approaches in analysing qualitative data in social science research). In a continuum with content analysis and grounded theory placed at the opposite extreme ends, thematic analytic approach not only occupies the centre point but also spreads towards the flanks of both directions from that centre-point (as shown by the arrows, in the above Figure 4.1). What can we learn from this? Evidently, this highlights the existence of variations within the thematic

analysis approach itself (King, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). By variation we mean researchers using the thematic analytic approach hardly subscribe to a ‘one size fits all’ kind of analysis approach when analysing qualitative research data. As observed from the above continuum, some of those researchers using thematic analysis operate close to the content analysis approach (a purely phenomenological, abstract position), while others get close to grounded theory (which may incline toward a ‘soft-nosed’ logical positivism), hence, the flexibility and choice for thematic analysis as the appropriate analytic approach for analysing the research data of this thesis.

4.6 Conclusion

The qualitative research data dealt with research participants’ accounts about their experiences and perceptions regarding the integration of Somalis in Sweden. It meant staying close to the reality of the respondents and how they saw that reality. It was in essence by drawing from these experiences and perceptions – i.e., research participants’ ‘subjective understandings and interpretations’ regarding the topic of inquiry –, that this research attempts to answer the (research) questions it posed (cf. Denzin, 1989:27).

The first section dealt with the choice of methodology, sampling and data collection methods and processes. The appropriateness of qualitative research methods were highlighted, among others, its appropriateness to study sensitive topics and minorities, its use of small samples

(where sampling frames are not readily available) and its tendency to preserve the chronological flow of events within the phenomenon under investigation. The method used for gathering information was interviewing. These were semi-structured (in the case with Somali respondents) and structured (in the case of Swedish officials). A focus group session was also included as a method for data collection. The sampling strategy adopted was purposive, non-probability given the size of the sample. Sampling was arrived at through the use of the snowball technique. Data was collected in stages. The first stage involved individual interviews with twenty-eight Somalis, the second, ten officials, and the third, a focus group that comprised of eight persons. The impact of the researcher's identity (biography) and status on the research and data collection processes was also highlighted.

The Second Section dealt with analysis which occurred in stages, viz.: transcription, familiarisation, and coding. Attempts were also made to justify the choice of analytic approach, i.e., thematic analysis, for the research. Two main points were highlighted. One, the flexibility thematic analysis offered in comparison to alternative analysis approaches. The second was the compatibility of thematic analysis to the research's ontological and epistemological positions.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 EMPLOYMENT (LABOUR MARKET) AND EDUCATION

This chapter identifies unemployment and ‘unsuitable’ education as factors that impinge upon the socio-economic integration of Somalis in Sweden. By ‘unsuitable’ education we mean education that is either ‘poor’, ‘low’ or ‘non-relevant’ to the new setting.

Labour market participation and education are two key domains of integration. Together they form the basis for the discussion in this chapter. With regard to labour market relations, ‘unemployment’ instead of ‘employment’ takes the centre stage in this deliberation for the central reason that the former is a serious problem that afflicts Somalis in Sweden. In respect to education, this chapter focuses on the prevalence of ‘illiteracy’ and ‘unsuitable’ education among Somalis. Attention will also be paid to the ‘emergent perception’ that Somalis have done ‘little’ to improve their educational status despite being in Sweden for a considerable amount of time.

5.1 Unemployment (Rather than Employment)

Before exploring the issue of unemployment among Somalis in Sweden, it is useful to look firstly at some broader aspects of ‘unemployment’. First a brief definition of the concept, unemployment is given. Second a short overview of the different types of unemployment – as

gleaned from the literature that was reviewed is provided – with the intent of isolating the type(s) of unemployment that afflicts Somalis in Sweden. Extra emphasis is given to the state of the Swedish economy in the 1990s recession and its subsequent re-structuring, respectively, as factors that contributed and perpetuated unemployment among Somalis in Sweden.

5.1.1 Defining Unemployment

The classical definition of the ‘unemployed’ is perhaps best captured by the ILO’s ‘Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians’ (1982:§10, 1-6) which adopted resolutions on the statistics of the economically active population, employment, under-employment and unemployment. According to this Conference, the ‘unemployed’ comprise of persons who during a reference period were “without work”, i.e., were not in paid employment or self-employment. Secondly, these persons were “currently available for work”, i.e., were available for paid work or self-employment. Thirdly, these persons were “seeking work”, i.e., have undertaken specified steps in a recent period to seek paid employment or self employment. Specified steps refers to the registration of persons with employment exchanges, the sending of applications to employers, and the necessary follow-up required to secure employment or self-employment for themselves. Unemployment is thus a state in which a person is without work, available for employment, and is currently seeking work.

5.1.2 Types of Unemployment

Economists often distinguish three types of unemployment, viz.: frictional, classical and structural unemployment. Frictional unemployment, also referred to as voluntary unemployment, is where the individual is unemployed because s/he wants to find a job of his/her choice (Abraham, 1983). People may refrain from taking up certain available jobs (and remain unemployed) in the hope of securing another with better remuneration or opportunities for advancement. This type of unemployment is, therefore, deliberately chosen by the person and can easily be eliminated if the individual takes up a job currently available. When it comes to Somalis in Sweden, this type of unemployment could be ruled out in the sense that what mattered most was ‘to secure a job of any kind’, as one respondent put it. And as another puts it, ‘they were not in the business of discriminating against jobs’.

Classical unemployment is often associated with rising wage costs, decrease in product demand and falling productivity, in which case firms and business are forced to shed workers (Lilien, 1982). This type of unemployment affected Somalis indirectly, indirectly in the sense that Somalis were ‘bystanders’ when it came to the Swedish labour market during the 1990s – when this type of unemployment was at its acutest. In the 1990s, Sweden faced one of its worst economic down-turn since the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s. As relative newcomers who required time to learn Swedish and to adjust in society accordingly, Somalis had little opportunity in finding work in the prevailing circumstances of the day.

Structural unemployment occurs where there is a mismatch between the jobs available and the qualities of the potential employee or where a gap exists between the skills needed by employers and the skills the workforce possess (Abraham, 1983). One of the reasons could be that of a skills deficit in potential workers. This type of unemployment is most appropriate to Somalis in Sweden.

Both classical and structural unemployment are involuntary. Unlike frictional unemployment, classical and structural unemployment are viewed as macroeconomic concepts (rather than a microeconomic one) which means they are not, often, the outcome of decisions made by the individuals (or small firms) concerned but by forces independent of their decisions or desires (see Sawyer & Spencer, 2008).

5.1.3 Unemployment as a theme

Unemployment was among *a priori* sub-themes under the major theme, ‘work’, which was imposed on this research. In terms of ‘work’, this research was interested in looking, among other things, at the current occupations and occupational statuses (employed or unemployed, permanent or temporary), skills and work experiences of Somalis in Sweden. In addition this research was also curious about whether or not previous skills and work experiences acquired from abroad or in Somalia prior to their arrival in Sweden was ‘valued’ (i.e., taken into consideration) by employers. The rationale of doing this was to comprehend how the situation

of Somali respondents looked like in order to form a ‘hunch’ about the way the larger population (Somalis in Sweden) actually fared in terms of its labour market integration.

5.1.4 Extensive and continuous

This research has found that Somalis had to contend with extensive and continuous [unbroken] unemployment period(s) – i.e., very long unemployment spells which resulted into a kind of quasi-permanent situation which excluded many Somalis from the Swedish labour market. This scenario is best articulated by one Somali research participant who laments:

Unemployment, rather than employment, has been
part of our normalised existence in Sweden.

Part of this unemployment period is justifiable, as noted previously, since Somalis like other immigrants are required to acquire language, educational and cultural competences to facilitate their transition into the new setting. This period in which they must acquire these forenamed imperatives is conventionally referred to as the ‘establishment phase’. However, for Somalis their ‘establishment period’ seemed to be lengthier than was probably the case for most other groups in Sweden.

Indeed, the evidence gathered from our sample shows that nearly all Somali research participants had to contend with extremely long spell of unemployment. Moreover, a sizeable

number of Somalis have yet to gain a foothold in Swedish labour market, ten to fifteen years down the line as per the time the interviews were conducted in Dec. 2006 – Jan. 2007 (see Table 5.1). This means a number of Somalis have not had a single paid job since they arrived in Sweden. Furthermore, the weak position of Somalis in Swedish labour market is reflected in the uncertain nature of the job tenures they have (as temporary or part-time workers) which further indicated that many Somalis who are currently ‘employed’, lack secure viable jobs. By *viable* job, we mean a job with a relative long tenure (at least six months) with which an individual is able to support him/herself or his/her family without the recourse to benefits or allowances from other sources e.g., unemployment benefits or social assistance, among others.

Although at the time of the interview there were few ‘part-timers’ among the respondents (i.e., four out of twenty-eight), this research has found that many Somalis had over the years, only had access to temporary employment. By temporary employment, we mean the ‘on-and-off’ type of relationship that seemed to characterise the way Somalis immigrants related to the Swedish labour market.

Indeed, working as part-timers or taking up jobs whose tenure was of an ad hoc, short-term and less secure was in itself not a bad idea. These jobs are particularly convenient for those Somalis engaged in education. For some students embarking on education entailed many years of poor economic conditions as all they had as an income was their study assistance (a meagre resource to live on). Besides, some of these students had family obligations, hence, the need

for extra income. The most common types of temporary or part-time jobs that Somalis undertook included, working as interpreters and as Somali language instructors (in schools with Somali pupils).

Returning to my own albeit unrepresentative sample, important clues are revealed. The sample itself confirms the widely held impression that unemployment among Somalis in Sweden is ‘perverse’. As Table 5.1 shows, only fifteen of the twenty eight Somali research respondents were employed. Of these fifteen, nine were employed on permanent basis (of which only one was female), four on a temporary or part-time (none of which were women) basis and two were employed in a municipal-run project (none of which were women). Two students (one male and one female) were engaged in full-time studies. Eleven Somalis were openly unemployed. Among these eleven (comprising of six men and five women) there were seven of them (five women and two men) who have never been in employment since coming to the country – the majority of whom were in Sweden for between 10-15 years at the time of interview.

Table 5.1 An Overview of ‘Employment Statuses’ among Somali Research Respondents by Jan. 2007.

Sex	Permanent Basis	Temporary/Part-Time Basis	Project Basis	Student	Open Unemployment	Total
Male	8	2	2	1	6	19
Female	1	2	0	1	5	9
Total	9	4	2	2	11	28

The situation was an improvement from the 1990s. Indeed, the majority of Somalis who had jobs at the time the interview was conducted (fifteen if one includes those who had permanent, project or temporary employment) got their jobs in and around the year 2000 and onwards. This could reflect on the relatively improved position of Swedish economy towards the end of the 1990s.

5.1.4.1 The Swedish Economy

The state of Swedish economy in the 1990s and its dismal state of affair was a recurrent topic in many of the interviews in this research. Indeed, two important aspects came out of the analysis of the data pertaining to the sections on the Swedish economy. The first one related to the sluggish performance of the Swedish economy, especially in the 1990s. The second one related to the reconstruction of the economy once it emerged from the recession of the 1990s. Both these two developments have had profound effects on Somalis vis-à-vis their relation to, as well as participation in Swedish labour market. A consensus thus emerged among respondents, Somalis and Swedish officials alike, that the economic situation at the time – and its effects afterwards – was a significant factor in influencing and perpetuating unemployment among Somali immigrants in Sweden throughout the 1990s and beyond.

The dire economic crisis Sweden faced in the first half of the 1990s was, indeed, unprecedented in recent memory. As Eliason & Storrie (2006) wrote:

At the beginning of the 1990s, Sweden experienced a macroeconomic chock unparalleled since the Great Depression. The gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 6% from the cyclical peak in the first quarter of 1990 to the trough in the first quarter of 1993. By this year unemployment had risen to 8%, while the total employment fell by 13% between the first quarters of 1990 and 1994.

The most dramatic episode occurred in 1992 when the Swedish Government abandoned its ‘fight to defend’ the currency (the *Krona*), during which period the Swedish Central Bank (*Riksbanken*) had to raise interest rates briefly to a staggering 500% – sending ‘shockwaves through the European Monetary System’ (Ipsen, 1992). Moreover, falling GDP and lower unemployment resulted in a sharp deterioration of public sector finances. In the year 1994, the central government budget deficit exceeded 15% of GDP (see Hauptmeier, *et al.*, 2006:20). Thus 1990s Sweden was one of economic slowdown and severe economic crisis.

5.1.4.1.1 *Relatively New*

The economic slump of the early 1990s coincided with a period when many Somalis came to Sweden in relatively large numbers. This recession lasted for several years. In all those years, Somalis were at the mercy of the Swedish labour market where the demand for available jobs outstripped their supply. Indeed, with insufficient overall demand for labour and fewer opportunities open to the unemployed, vulnerable people like Somalis – comprising then mainly of refugees – became even further marginalised. Moreover, the problem for Somalis

was further compounded by the lack of vital human resources such as Swedish language competence and education to compete in the labour market. Language competence and education were, as it were, the very tools of the trade that had to be acquired before Somalis, like all newcomers, could acquire jobs in Sweden.

The prolonged period of economic slump meant the Swedish labour market was inaccessible for Somalis in Sweden. Indeed, throughout the interviews of this research, particularly with Somali respondents, sentiments such as ‘there were no jobs in this country’; ‘there was a lack of jobs in Sweden’; ‘jobs were closed in the 1990s’, etc, commonly recurred to describe the connection these respondents were making between the pervasive nature of unemployment among Somalis and the Swedish economy in the 1990s. Below were among the plethora of sentiments used by some respondents as pertaining to this period of concern, i.e., the 1990s.

Irshad, a 41 year old male respondent:

I came in the middle of an economic depression. Sweden was in dire economic situation. What could I do in that situation? I felt helpless in the sense that I could not do anything about my unemployment state.

Abdiwahid, a 33 year old male respondent:

We realised how precarious the situation was. Few employers even bothered to look at us as potential workers.

Hanan, a 42 year old male respondent:

There were numerous lay-offs. Firms were shedding workers like trees do to their leaves in autumn. We were refugees. Many of us were nowhere near fulfilling the requirements of Swedish labour market. We were truly disadvantaged.

5.1.4.1.2 The Era of Economic Recovery

The Swedish economic recovered towards the late 1990. What emerged from this recovery was a re-structured economy. Rapid changes to the nature of work and labour market had occurred. The types of jobs that characterised the previous economy were replaced with others created, primarily, in the high-tech industries and Information technology (IT) – where continuous innovation ushered the growth of new industries and services. It should be noted that in the previous economy, industrial and manufacturing jobs formed the bulk of ‘immigrant jobs’ – which many Somalis hoped to acquire when the economy recovered from the recession of the 1990s.

The Swedish labour market thus become inclined towards a situation where the demand for higher skills levels had extensively increased and the demands for lower skills labour considerably decreased (cf. Campbell, 2000). At the same time, many Somalis lacked the requirements to adjust and become better suited to the changing nature of the new economy. Indeed, because Somalis lacked the required skills and or skills levels for the jobs being

created in this new, emergent, re-structured, high-tech, post-industrialism economy, they were as disadvantaged (sometimes more disadvantaged) as they were before the economy was re-structured (i.e., during the economic recession of the 1990s).

In reflecting the changing nature of jobs and the adjustments that was required, and comparing his previous work in Somalia, Jeelle, a 53 year old male respondent, had this to say:

There is difference between the kind of job I did in Somalia and here. Even though I have worked at an agricultural processing plant in Somalia, we still employed a great deal of labour intensive tasks as opposed to the knowledge-savvy, highly mechanised and automated economy we find in Sweden. One has to be highly trained to do the kind of jobs available in Sweden. That is why many jobs are out of reach for many of us Somalis here.

All in all, the generation of, and demand for, blue collar factory or manufacturing has rapidly fallen in Sweden. These jobs had hitherto acted as the gateway for immigrants into Swedish labour market. Even when these jobs are available, the competition has become stiffer as there would normally be more demand than supply.

5.1.4.1.3 The New Millennium

The Swedish economy that experienced several years of deep recession showed signs of sustained recovery towards the end of the 1990s (Eliason & Storrie, 2006). Indeed, the general perception among Somali respondents seemed to confirm this, although there were still those few voices that doubted this to be the case. To many, the Millennium had ushered ‘some rays of hope’ for them (Somalis). This was because relatively, more and more Somalis, especially, Somali men, were entering the Swedish labour market, many of them making their debut into this labour market. This entrance was particularly visible in the transport service sector in Stockholm where more Somali men were seen in ‘uniform’ driving busses and taxis in the city. This scenario contrasts with the bleak years of the 1990s where Somalis ‘stayed away from the labour market en masse’, as one research respondent puts it.

Nonetheless, the few who doubted the ‘new Millennium Thesis’ had their own views as to why Somali men were securing jobs in the transport sector of Stockholm. To them, this was more ‘accidental’ than an improvement in the economy. They argued that many (non-Somalis) who previously worked in this branch had moved on to other more lucrative jobs or careers leaving ‘room’ for Somalis and others in similar positions. Moreover, they argued that these changes amounted to only very minor changes to the overall situation of Somalis in the labour market since many Somalis still languished in unemployment despite the improvement in the Swedish economy.

5.2 Literacy and Education Problems

Problems in literacy and education were raised by Somali respondents as issues that impinge upon the integration of Somalis in Sweden. In particular, the prevalence of illiteracy and ‘unsuitable’ education became the basis for discussing the literacy and educational problems that bedevil Somalis in Sweden. A third additional observation that emerged from the deliberation with Swedish officials with regards to Somalis in Sweden was the assertion that Somalis had done ‘little’ to improve their own educational status since coming to Sweden. Or, as they put it, Somalis have not made use of the Swedish education system, as desired or expected. According to some officials, greater participation in the educational system in Sweden would invariably have had the potential to propel Somalis into better position(s) in Sweden than is the case today.

Accordingly, this section will commence by looking into the claim of ‘illiteracy being prevalent and widespread among Somalis in Sweden’. The second issue will look at the claim that the education Somalis possessed was ‘unsuitable’ in the new setting. Lastly, the possible reasons why Somalis have not improved their education by failing to grasp the opportunities accorded to them in Sweden will be discussed.

5.2.1 Illiteracy

The initial attention to focus on ‘illiteracy’ in this research was borne out of two sources. The first was the assertion made by four Somali research respondents that illiteracy was not only prevalent but also widespread among Somalis in Sweden and by implication inhibited their labour market integration. The second source was borne out of the examination of the trajectories of five Somalis (out of the twenty-eight interviewed in this research). These five Somalis came to Sweden without any formal education (i.e., had not attended schools in Somalia or elsewhere prior to their arrival). Moreover, a closer look into the progress they made in terms of education in Sweden showed they have not made any significant inroads into the schooling system of Sweden, despite being in the country for a substantial length of period. This suggests that there may be underlying literacy problems within this group.

The issue of illiteracy as being prevalent and widespread among Somalis was confronted with the Swedish officials interviewed as well as our focus group participants. Whilst the first part (i.e., its prevalence) was acknowledged, its being widespread among Somalis was disputed. Maria, an official involved in coordinating courses for a group of people ‘who have not attended school in their home countries’ (i.e., individuals who could be classified as illiterates) had, for example, no doubt about the prevalence of illiteracy among Somalis in Sweden. Nonetheless, Maria had doubts when it came to the second claim (i.e., of illiteracy being widespread among Somalis):

From what I observe and gather from the teachers, incidents of illiteracy among Somali immigrants attending these courses, past or present, is not uncommon. However, how widespread the prevalence is among the general Somali population is difficult to ascertain, in my opinion, since we only deal with a very tiny portion of that population.

In addition, officials acknowledged that illiterate Somalis would face ‘additional’ difficulties to those already faced by educated Somalis such as unemployment and discrimination. They claimed, in a scenario where even those Somalis with relatively high education have problems in gaining a foothold in Swedish labour market, the fate of illiterate Somalis becomes even more precarious. Some of these officials concluded that illiterates were more likely to remain illiterate, given their reluctance to start schooling or to become literate. Among the reasons given were their apparent lack of ‘study habits’ and the lack of motivation.

Surprisingly, however, there seemed to be an understanding among officials why Somalis who cannot read and write often shun learning despite the opportunities available in Sweden for them to become literate and to subsequently pursue education and procure employment. As Eriksson (a social worker with Märsta Social District in Stockholm) puts it:

One cannot simply become literate overnight, or with relative ease, despite the opportunities accorded to them by society. If one has not gone to school as a child in Somalia, doing so here in Sweden now as an adult would be a daunting experience. Of course there is the element of embarrassment involved. They also lack the habit of learning as well as

motivation to do s o. For those very reasons, they rather stay away from school than start it as an adult.

5.2.1.1 Illiteracy against the Backdrop of a Knowledge-based Society

A number of official respondents were keen to point out that illiteracy had no place in this digital age and in modern Sweden. After all, Sweden legislated for compulsory schooling in 1962. Since then nine-years of comprehensive schooling for all its children aged between ages 7 and 16 is now compulsory. Moreover, these officials argued that illiterates would have difficulties in making any headway in Sweden because Sweden is a knowledge-based society – meaning the nation and society has moved from an industrial to post-industrial era or stage. This new development requires highly skilled workers and has less need for the low-skilled. Jobs that require less education or skills have thus become even more competitive making it unlikely or harder for illiterate persons to a gain foothold in Swedish labour market. Eva, a youth employment adviser with the Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm, makes a reference of how both scarcity and competition for menial jobs makes illiterates excluded from the jobs that one could say they could have a chance of doing:

Even menial jobs such as cleaning are getting complicated in Sweden. Cleaners are expected to be literate in Sweden. They would be expected to read and follow label instructions on chemical agent containers. The cleaner has to be environmentally conscious, become attune to the way employers or contractors want cleaning agents and other chemicals used for health and safety reasons, be able to write warning signs to lead people away

from slippery floors, and so on and so forth. That requires more than just scrapping floors.

Helena, an immigration officer had a similar follow up:

This is a very well informed society. Most jobs, even menial ones require workers to digest multiple information, engage with the different cadres in various departments, and do some sort of administrative work such as filling forms. It is difficult to live as an illiterate in such a highly literate and informed society.

5.2.1.2 Not Unique to Somalis

To reiterate, whilst acknowledging the prevalence of illiteracy among Somalis, some Swedish officials questioned the generalised assertion that illiteracy was widespread amongst Somalis in Sweden. Instead they argued that illiteracy was more or less present in all recent arrivals, e.g., Iraqis, Afghanis, etc, hence, its prevalence was not unique to Somalis as a group. Moreover, another reason why illiteracy was perhaps not an ‘eye-catching’ a phenomenon among Somalis was that the community was beset by a host of other problems, notably unemployment, which tended to ‘dwarf’ illiteracy in terms of the focus people would otherwise have put upon it.

Nonetheless, Swedish officials agreed to the fact that certain specific groups within the Somali group could be identified as candidates where illiteracy could be an issue. These include the elderly, women and young people (especially, those who arrive as adolescents in Sweden). As noted, from a labour market perspective, the elderly did not arouse much concern. As a number of respondents (Somalis and Swedish officials alike) pointed out, immigrants over the age of fifty and those who have not had a steady foothold in the Swedish labour market were more or less ‘written-off’, in the sense that it would probably be unlikely for them to be of interest to employers in Sweden. Indeed, even ‘native’ Swedes who were in their fifties and who were unemployed would normally struggle to regain their foothold into Swedish labour market since a younger skilled workforce would be more attractive to employers.

The second proposition put forward by officials was that illiteracy was more of a problem for Somali women than Somali men. Officials were often talking from their experience of working with Somali clients. A number of these officials noted that Somali women were more predisposed to be illiterate than Somali men. They argued that whilst Somali men may try hard to acquire education and work; many women were more or less disengaged from that process. One reason was that Somali women were traditionally disadvantaged, as more emphasis was given to boys than girls when it came to who should go to school given the meagre resources within Somali families. Once in Sweden, this disadvantage has not ended. Other possible reasons include Somali women taking a greater responsibility for children and household work which could hamper their plans to study (see Chapter Nine).

With regard to illiteracy being a problem to Somali youngsters arriving in Sweden, officials linked the predicaments of these youngsters to their background in Somalia – where they had no opportunity of schooling, since the education system in that country had collapsed. Nonetheless, officials generally agreed that, in contrast to the other two groups (i.e., the elderly and women), Somali youths were in a better position to change their predicaments for the better in Sweden. This was because young people learn the Swedish language and acquire social and cultural competences of the host society with relative ease. They also connected with their peers (‘native’ Swedes) much easier in comparison to their adult counterparts.

5.2.1.3 Difficult concept to pursue

Illiteracy is a term that has a precise definition. It means the inability to read and write. If one goes by the definition of illiteracy as being the state of not knowing how to read and write, then that becomes untenable as far as many Somali adults in Sweden were concerned. This notion was vehemently projected by a number of discussants in our focus group session. As one discussant questioned, generating nods from his co-panellists:

Tell me, how many Somalis could not read and write when we were in Somalia? I think the answer is very obvious, very few.

From the discussions of the focus group, there are two factors that rendered the pervasiveness of illiteracy among adult Somalis untenable. The first was attributed to Swedish for Immigrant (SFI), the Swedish language instruction course immigrants undergo in Sweden. The second

had to do with the ‘Somalisation’ campaigns in Somalia in the 1970s to eradicate illiteracy which led many Somalis to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Arguably, one reason why ‘illiteracy’ was an inappropriate word to employ was because almost all Somali adults in Sweden who have been in the country for a considerable period, three, five, or more years, (as many of the respondents had done), would have participated in Swedish language instruction for immigrants (SFI). SFI is mandatory for immigrants who live off benefits, especially introduction allowances and social assistance – the two main forms of ‘income’ for new arrivals as well other individuals who had no recourse to employment related benefits (e.g., unemployment- , sickness benefits). The reason why they were not entitled to the latter (i.e., work-related benefits) was because they had no, or a weak, foothold in the Swedish labour market, hence, their ineligibility. Receiving Introduction Allowances (given to refugees in their first few years in Sweden) and Social Assistance (*Socialbidrag*) was contingent upon the attendance by recipients of language and other programmes earmarked to improve their position in continuing with education or to help them find work. Accordingly, through SFI, most adult Somalis were expected to have gained some literacy and numeracy skills, rendering the notion of illiteracy being widespread among Somalis in Sweden obsolete.

The notion of illiteracy as being widespread among Somalis was also rejected by the focus group panel on the ground that many adult Somalis (even those who had not attended school) would have taken advantage of the ambitious Somalisation programmes (within Somalis) of

the 1970s where many Somalis were said to have learnt how to read and write. Indeed, despite Somalisation programmes falling short of their stated goals, and despite the difficulties these programmes faced in terms of financial, human resources and the obvious logistic problems involved in trying to reach nomadic pastoralists who were constantly moving from one place to another, these literacy campaigns to eradicate adult illiteracy, were heralded as a success (Abdi, 1998; Warsame, 2001). Nonetheless, one obvious weakness of this argument was that it did not take into account that many Somalis were born long after these campaigns concluded. This is especially true for those who were born in the late 1980s onwards, and who had come of age when the entire education system in Somalia had collapsed in the wake of Somalia itself ceasing to function as a state. It should be noted that Somalia has had no functioning central government since the overthrow of Barre's regime in 1991.

5.2.2 'Unsuitable' Education

With regard to education, the following notions were affirmed: First, Somalis suffered not so much from illiteracy but from problems of 'unsuitable' education. Second, few Somali come to Sweden with easily transferable educational qualifications when they arrived. Third, once in Sweden, Somalis had not 'done enough' to raise their educational levels to a 'satisfactory' level both quantitatively and qualitatively to increase their chances for successful integration. Before we examine these 'subjective' assessments, let us look briefly at factors that seem to lend credence to the disadvantage position of Somalis vis-à-vis their educational levels in Sweden.

First, many Somalis seem to possess pre-secondary education which demonstrates the ‘unsuitability’ of their education in Sweden. This is evident when comparing pre-secondary education levels of Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes. For example, 2007, 39% of Somalis possessed pre-secondary education compared with 15% of ‘native’ Swedes (SCB, 2007). In addition, as Table (5.2) shows, the figure of 39% (i.e., of Somalis with pre-secondary education) could even be higher given that there is no information registered on the qualifications of 18% of Somalis in Sweden (SCB, 2007). One could only guess that a sizeable number among the 18% of Somalis (with no information registered on them) are likely to possess pre-secondary education.

Second, few Somalis enter higher education in comparison to other immigrant groups in Sweden. Only 25% of Somali 25 year olds (born in 1981) began their university education in the Academic Year 2006/7, compared with 55% of their Iranian counterparts. The percentages of new entrant 25 year olds from Poland and Bosnia-Herzegovina were much higher than Somali new entrants in the same year at 41% and 49% respectively (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.2 Comparison of Pre-education Levels between Somalis and ‘Swedish Born’ In Sweden.

Background	Pre-secondary Education (%)	No Information (%)
Somalia	39	18
Swedish Born	15	0

Source: SCB (2007)

Table 5.3 Comparison of Higher Education Entrants for 25 year old students with Foreign Background (2006/7).

Background	Percentage
Bosnia-Hercegovina	41%
Iran	55%
Poland	49%
Somalia	25%

Source: SCB (2008)

Undoubtedly, ‘pre-secondary’ education is not enough for people to gain a foothold in Swedish labour market. The claim that the education of Somalis in Sweden is ‘unsuitable’ could thus be partly justified by the fact that a huge percentage of Somalis have only ‘pre-secondary education’. In addition, many Somalis remain disadvantaged long after their immigration into Sweden. One reason is because they have not improved their position significantly in terms of education. Subsequently, this impacts on their integration in Sweden. Indeed, there was an impression among Swedish official respondents that Somalis who came with some form of education (particularly, secondary and post-secondary education) from abroad have not only stuck with those previous qualifications, but they have also failed to grasp the opportunities to evaluate those qualifications so as to bring them (i.e., the qualifications) in line with their Swedish counterparts.

All this happened against the backdrop where education was provided free of charge up to and including university. Study assistance (earmarked for student maintenance) was also available until the age of 55. Besides, there were numerous avenues in which people could go about educating themselves in Sweden. One could, for example, start from the most elementary of stages by attending classes (often in study circle forms) organised by adult education organisations (such as *ABF*, *Medborgarskola*, etc) or go through folk high schools (*folkhögskolor*). Folk high schools are boarding schools and are free of charge. One could also go through municipally-run adult education schools (KOMVUX), which is one of the most common educational avenues for Somali adults in Sweden. KOMVUX provides education ranging from the very basic education, *grundvux* (for beginners), to secondary level certificates. KOMVUX is renowned for its flexible learning forms, e.g., evening classes, etc., where the needs of working students and others who cannot attend day-time classes for a variety of reasons are met.

5.2.2.1 The Way Forward

Somalis, like other immigrants, have to acquire sufficient command in Swedish language before they can obtain some form of qualifications or skills that can help them gain a foothold in the labour market. Education thus represents the next natural move to embark upon. Indeed, Somalis (like other refugees) coming to Sweden would normally have two options when it comes to the pursuit of education in their new setting. They could either start their education in Sweden from ‘scratch’, to borrow from one respondent, or supplement their previous

education (obtained from abroad) with Swedish courses or credits so as to bring them in line with equivalent of Swedish qualifications. Let us explore these two options further.

‘Starting from scratch’ is a rather straightforward decision or process to undertake. It entails shelving previous qualifications (obtained from abroad) prior to coming to Sweden and starting one’s education afresh. Starting from ‘scratch’ gives individuals the option to start primary level education and work their way through up to university. Alternatively, individuals could end up in other institutions that provide specialised (vocational) education and training geared towards employment. For those who had no or low education levels when they arrived in Sweden this is the only option. Nonetheless, others (among Somali respondents) who had obtained education from abroad have also opted for this option instead of supplementing them with Swedish courses.

The other option open to Somalis who came with qualifications was to enhance their previous qualifications to obtain equivalence with Swedish qualifications. Before any supplementary or upgrading of previous qualification can proceed, these qualifications have to be evaluated or validated. The duty of determining whether or not these qualifications correspond to Swedish equivalence standards lies with the National Swedish Agency for Higher Education (HSV), the body that oversees institutes of higher education in Sweden.

The evaluation of qualifications is important in two senses. One it confirms the individual's past attainment. Second, it helps employers and institutions of learning in decisions pertaining to recruitment and enrolment respectively. However, as past research and reports demonstrate, the recognition of foreign qualifications by HVS hardly translates into immediate employment or entry into institutions of higher education. This is because foreign qualifications are often likely to be relegated to lower status in comparison to their Swedish counterparts. As Dingu-Kyrklund (2005) maintains, validation of foreign qualifications are often rendered weak or ineffective because the educational curricula completed abroad are considered inferior and thus not accepted as equivalent to the Swedish 'standard'.

Moreover, where immigrants find jobs using their certificates or diplomas obtained abroad – without supplementing them to attain Swedish equivalence – they are likely to obtain jobs that have much lower status than they would acquire in their home countries. As one Report by the then Swedish Integration Office (*Integrationsverket*) confirms:

It is not uncommon for foreign trained nurses to work as auxiliary nurses or health support workers in Sweden (*Rapport Integration*, 2005).

Relying on the facts gleaned from research respondents, Somalis and Swedish officials alike; there were four basic reasons why qualifications obtained by Somalis from abroad had to be 'evaluated'. Firstly, there were obvious differences in schooling systems, curricula, content and qualities of education between Sweden and Somalia. Secondly, there were wide

technological differences between Somalia and Sweden (bringing the element of ‘quality’ to the forefront in explaining why qualifications from Somalia were likely to be viewed as inferior to those in Sweden). Thirdly, the need to learn and become attuned to the requirements in Sweden would require one to acquire educational and cultural competences peculiar to the new setting. The latter related to the particular properties Swedish employers were looking for from immigrant applicants (e.g., Somalis). These properties were both objective qualities (e.g., formal ‘Swedish’ qualifications) and subjective (e.g., the possession of social and cultural competences of the host society that is often acquired through Swedish education).

Despite the stated need for evaluation of qualifications obtained from abroad, only three Somalis in our sample (out of twenty eight persons) actually reported sending their qualification to HVS. Firstly, all three reported receiving recognitions that were far short of their previous qualification levels (i.e., when they were abroad). This was in line with results from the previous research and reports mentioned. Secondly, and more importantly, the fact that only three out of many (among the twenty-eight Somali respondents) applied for evaluation, clearly indicates an under-use of HVS’ services pertaining to evaluation of qualifications obtained from abroad – when it comes to Somalis in Sweden. This latter statement was supported by the views expressed by some Swedish officials interviewed who commonly deployed semantics like ‘reluctance’, ‘resignation’, ‘resistance’ and ‘unwillingness’ to put across their point on the issues pertaining to evaluation, education and

by extension the labour market participation of Somalis in Sweden. Elisabet, an immigration officer with previous experience of working with Somalis in Rinkeby, states:

As a matter of fact, Somalis seem to stick to their previous qualifications and competences which are unsuitable here in Sweden. I have no idea why they are reluctant.

Mona, a social worker at Rinkeby had also this to say:

I don't know why they are unwilling to send their School certificates, diplomas or degrees to HSV for evaluation.

Let us now juxtapose the opinions and experiences formed by officials to what some Somali research respondents had to say on the issue of evaluation of previous qualifications. Here one may deduce the 'reluctance', 'resignation' and 'resistance' that some of the officials pointed out.

Hanan, a 42 year male old respondent:

Whether or not you come with a degree does not matter that much as no one would recognise it in Sweden.

Bashir, a 39 year old male respondent:

Nobody would after all recognize my previous qualification

Rukiya, a 29 year old female respondent:

It would hardly have helped to secure me a job here.

Abdirizak, a 33 year old male respondent:

The kind of education you have prior to coming to Sweden is somewhat irrelevant.

Hassan, a 37 year old male respondent:

My qualification from Somalia was worthless. Why bother send it to the authorities [HVS]. After all it [qualification] would be held with low esteem either way, whether I send it or not.

The question that comes to mind is, were these qualifications ‘actually’ obsolete? As evident, from the perspectives of some Somalis, evaluation amounted to a futile exercise with some insisting that the only way forward for them was to start ‘everything’ relating to education from ‘scratch’. However, this claim was vehemently rejected by some Swedish officials. Although officials agreed qualifications acquired outside Sweden may not be equated or treated as equivalent as Swedish ones, they, nonetheless, argued that qualifications obtained abroad gave the individual ‘a launching pad or the springboard needed when starting a new life a new setting, and from which it became easier to sprint’, as one official respondent put it. As another official argued, ‘one needs not start everything all over again if s/he does not want to change course all together’.

5.2.2.2 Further Observation

This research can confirm that, one issue that makes it problematic for Somalis to verify the qualifications obtained from their home country had to do with the special difficulties they faced in terms of problems in their country of origin, Somalia. It was no secret that many Somalis came to Sweden without documentation (passports, certificates, diplomas, etc). Accordingly, they often lacked the evidence to back up their claims regarding past educational, professional, and work experiences. Moreover, because Somalia was a country where the entire state apparatus and all its institutions, including education, had collapsed, it became harder for Somalis who came without papers to ever prove the qualifications they attained or the work experiences they may have accrued in Somalia.

With regard to qualifications, the following three points were noted. The first one was where (e.g., which country) the qualification was obtained from. As this research has indicated doubts were often raised about the educational standards of Third World countries, which include Somalia. One contributing factor was the perceived disparity in the quality of training/qualification between Sweden and these countries. Obvious technological gap(s) or differences were commonly cited as the basis of the inferiority of qualification accrued from Third World countries. As one official, Eriksson, a social worker with Märsta Social District, emphasis:

To be qualified as a doctor in today's Somalia or Afghanistan would mean qualifying in a setting

devoid of basics. Training in such an atmosphere is beset with a lot of problems both in terms of personnel to train doctors, and the lack of tools and material needed to train doctors. These are some of the reasons why doctors from Third World Countries have to re-educate themselves in Sweden.

Secondly, a lot has to do with Swedish labour market 'selectivity'. The Swedish labour market does not validate all types of qualifications obtained abroad. Focus was often laid on professions where shortages of qualified personnel existed, and where those who supplement their previous qualifications were more likely to secure employment. Examples of these professions included doctors, dentists and sometimes engineers. Nonetheless, few Somalis possessed qualifications that could easily be transferable to the Swedish setting. This is one reason why the showing of Somalis in these professions was said to be non-existent or very insignificant, indeed.

Thirdly, for most newcomers certain professions seemed 'impenetrable'. These included law and to some extent journalism. These are two professions where fluency and a high command in Swedish language was almost a prerequisite to enroll. The situation could be different for second and subsequent immigrant generations. However, for first generation immigrants, there were few, if any, Somali lawyers or journalists in Sweden. For example, to their knowledge, none of the research respondents has known or come across a Somali lawyer (let alone one working in a reputable firm).

In our sample we had Hirab, a 55 year old male respondent, who qualified and worked as a lawyer in Somalis. He was realistic about his prospects of working as a lawyer in Sweden:

How could I master Swedish fluently and with a very short time to argue in the court of law on behalf of a client? Definitely, it could take me ages to do so. Even if I did, would I be hired? I believe this would be highly unlikely because other hurdles would crop up.

Hirab was alluding to structural barriers such as unemployment and age discrimination in the Swedish labour market.

5.2.2.3 Factors that impact upon Education

There were a number of factors that were identified that could be said to have contributed to their failure of Somalis to grasp the opportunities accorded to them by society in relation to education, and by extension their failure to improve their position in society. These factors include, ‘commitment to family’, ‘abrupt transition’ from pre-industrial to a post-industrial society, the precarious situation in Somalia, and their ‘temporariness’ of some in Sweden (i.e., in relation to the eagerness of some to wanting to relocate to another country).

‘Commitment to family’ was a factor espoused by a number of Somalis as an obstacle to their educational plans in Sweden. The issue was not just about ‘families’, but about ‘very large families’ that far exceeded what nuclear families in Sweden constitute. In fact, many nuclear

Somali families in Sweden are very large, i.e., comprising of eight, ten, or more persons. Naturally, looking after many children impacts on the ability of parents to educate themselves, especially when it comes to mothers, partly because of the time and energy they need to devote to the upbringing of their children, and, partly because they would have little time and energy to spare for their own education.

The poignancy of this description – the preoccupation with children and household – was summed up by one Somali respondent who talked about having ‘their hands being full’, when referring to Somali women raising large families, including herself. Isir, a 32 year old single, female respondent, with no children also lends credence to the inability of ‘mothers with young children’ to educate themselves in Sweden. As she states:

Our biggest problem with regard to education is taking care of large families as mothers whilst at same time fulfilling our own ambitions as individuals. Women are often torn between two irreconcilable choices. Many have thus given up on their ambition to educate themselves at the expense of familial obligations.

Another, Rukiya, a 29 year old female respondent, links her own inability to educate herself not only with the number of children she has to raise but also how she ‘planned’ her family.

The closer spacing of my five children was clearly a hindrance to my own dreams to educate myself.

The number of children a family has and their ‘spacing’ them were clearly problematic to these families, not least when it came to education and labour market participation of the women involved. Often, many of the children in these families were small; with two small children in the same nuclear family not uncommon. Naturally, some of the burden was relieved through child care and day centres. But all the same some of the children would require time with their mothers as they were too small to start day centres, according to women like Rukiya.

Technological gaps between Sweden and Somalia were also cited by several respondents. This had to do more with the coping ‘abilities’ of Somali individuals in a society (i.e., Swedish) that was in a post-industrial, postmodern stage in its development. In a post-industrial, postmodern society like Sweden, innovation, transformation and modernisation in education, technology, the economy, etc, were constantly pursued. Hence, for some Somalis, the society in which they found themselves was one in which they found hard to cope with given their own background (some of whom may originate from rural areas in Somalia).

This inability of Somalis to cope with a transforming innovative Swedish society is captured by Abdirizak, a 33 year old male respondent:

It is not that they are uneducated or unwilling to study. I am sure they would like to improve their situation. However, their problem is that of trying to cope up with an ever changing society.

For many Somalis, especially, those coming from rural pre-industrial backgrounds, such a transition was not only difficult but had occurred in an abrupt manner. The allusion, therefore, was that because these Somalis had not lived in industrial societies, making a leap from pre-industrialism to a postindustrialism almost overnight was in itself fraught with many difficulties. As Hassan, a 37 year old male respondent put it:

It is not as if people are making a transition from one goal post to another or to a scenario that is static. That would have been easier to catch up with. The issue rather is one where the society we came into requires us as individuals to not only change but to be also become more astute to trends that are constantly fluid and in changing state. The pace is so fast and one must respond accordingly. To catch up with that pace one has to literally sprint.

The ‘precarious situation of Somalia’ also figured prominently in the discussion with Somali respondents. This related to the pressures Somalis faced from relatives left back home in Somalia. These ‘pressures’ were portrayed as impacting on the motivation, as well as, the ability of Somalis to concentrate on their education in Sweden.

To reiterate, Somalia is a failed state. To understand what a failed state entails we turn to Mazrui (1995). Mazrui (1995) asserts that, in order to understand what a failed state is about, one has to examine the basic functions of the state first. Mazrui (1995) distinguishes six basic functions, viz.: sovereign control over territory; sovereign supervision of the national resources; effective and national revenue extraction from people, goods and services; the

capacity to build and maintain an adequate national infrastructure (roads, postal services, telephone systems, and the like); the capacity to render such basic services as sanitation, education, housing, and health care; and the capacity for governance and the maintenance of law and order. Accordingly, when these vital functions are non-existent, one can talk of that state as being a failed state. That is where the Somali nation finds itself today.

Somalis in Sweden may not have ‘taken over’ all those basic functions of their collapsed state but they do shoulder a lot more than was expected most of individuals on their own individual capacities. If not contributing in material terms, such as the remittances they send (often from the benefit they and their children receive from the municipality or state) their minds are constantly preoccupied with what was happening to their families back in Somalia. They also worry a great deal about what went on in Somalia, regarding the interminable conflict in Somalia. Accordingly, this constant worry about what happens to their relatives and their homeland affected their ability to invest and concentrate on their education in Sweden.

Last but not least, there was also a sense of ‘temporariness’ among some Somalis in Sweden, and this was cited as a reason why some Somalis may not invest in education. Indeed, a number of Somalis respondents talked of their desire to relocate from Sweden to other countries deemed more favourable in terms of their labour market situations. Furthermore, these individuals felt that, the countries in which they wanted to relocate accommodated their Somali cultural and religious (Islamic) way of life than was the case in Sweden. In addition,

three of our own Somali research respondents sent their wives and children to other countries, also, citing cultural and religious reasons for doing so. All in all, the lack of stability and security (i.e., the ‘temporariness’ of Somalis in Sweden) would undoubtedly have an impact on their ability to make progress in education.

5.3 Conclusion

This Chapter highlighted two main domains of integration: employment and education. First, long-term unemployment has come out as a major problem that afflicts Somalis in Sweden. The unemployment among Somalis was compounded, first, by the economic slump in Sweden in the 1990s, and later, by the restructuring of Swedish economy (as the economy improved from late 1990s onwards).

Secondly, ‘illiteracy’ and ‘unsuitable’ education were explored. Whilst there was contestation as to how widespread illiteracy was among Somalis in Sweden, its prevalence among certain groups of Somalis, notably, the elderly and women received some validation from the respondents. In relation to the ‘unsuitability’ of education, Somalis were said to stick with their previous qualifications and have done less to evaluate those qualifications in order to bring them in line with Swedish qualifications. This would have been the necessary step or direction to undertake so as to improve their position in terms of education and the labour market. Moreover, external factors that impact on the education of Somalis were discussed.

These included, ‘commitment to family’, ‘abrupt transition’ from pre-industrial to a post-industrial society, the precarious situation in Somalia, and their ‘temporariness’ in Sweden (i.e., in relation to the eagerness of some to wanting to relocate to another country).

CHAPTER SIX

6 HOUSING

This chapter identifies residential segregation as a factor that impinges upon the integration of Somalis in Sweden. The chapter begins by giving a brief definition of residential segregation, highlighting its dimensions and types. It then embarks on exploring at length, the causes, maintenance and perpetuation of residential segregation between Somalis and Swedes. Here residential segregation is explained largely as a process that is both individually and structurally driven. It is individually driven in the sense that some Somalis have contributed to their own residential segregation by wanting to live in close proximity with one another. It is structurally determined in the sense that their segregation is linked to forces that are external to their individual preferences. These include socioeconomic factors (e.g., unemployment, low incomes, etc) and policy changes that had ‘unintended’ consequences on residential segregation in Stockholm.

6.1 Residential Segregation

6.1.1 Definition of Residential Segregation

Residential (or housing) segregation relates to geographical locations where people live separately in neighbourhoods, suburbs, etc. Residential segregation is often defined in literature as the degree to which a minority group’s (or groups’) residential patterns differ

from those of the majority group. It often occurs along many lines, e.g., according to language, ethnicity, nationality, religion, race, class or socio-economic status, gender, age, etc (Schelling, 1971). Nonetheless, whatever the motives of residential separation maybe, it always entails social and physical separation of one group or multiple groups of people from another or others (Murdie & Borgegård, 1998).

6.1.2 Dimensions of Residential Segregation

Massey & Denton's (1988; 1989) provide the theoretical and empirical grounds for understanding residential segregation. Through their five *dimensions or indices*, social scientists are able to measure the degree to which a given minority group is residentially segregation from the majority group (Acevedo-Garcia & Osypuk, 2008); Kramer & Hogue, 2009). These five dimensions refer to *evenness*, *exposure*, *clustering*, *centralisation*, and *concentration* (Massey & Denton, 1988:283). To Massey & Denton 'evenness' is the most ideal degree of divergence; it comes about when the proportion of a minority group in a suburb equals the proportion of that group in the whole city (Massey & Denton, 1988:283). 'Exposure' relates to the prospects of a minority group having [residential] contacts with members of the majority group (Massey & Denton, 1988:287). 'Clustering' refers the extent by which areas inhabited by minority members adjoin one another or cluster, spatially (Massey & Denton, 1988:289). 'Centralisation' connotes the degree to which a group settles in or close to the central business districts (CBD) of cities (Massey & Denton, 1988:291). 'Concentration' refers to the relative size of space inhabited by a minority group. As more and

more members of a group move into an area, the concentration in that space is bound to increase. Massey & Denton (1989:373) conclude ‘a high level of segregation’ on the latter three dimensions is problematic because it often ‘isolates a minority group from amenities, opportunities, and resources that affect their socioeconomic well-being’.

6.1.3 Types of Residential Segregation

There are different types of residential segregation, the most common being demographic, socio-economic and ethnic. Examples of demographically determined segregation include separations that result from age or gender. Areas that host military bases or educational institutions, for example, tend to have neighbourhoods that are age-segregated (see Cowgill, 1994). Areas that house large industrial complexes (as in parts of contemporary Asia) normally have male and female cohort workers housed in purpose-built accommodations that segregate people along age or gender lines. Another type of demographically determined segregation arises with neighbourhoods where senior citizens predominate: sheltered housing for the elderly or gated retirement villages, etc (see Sherman, 1975; Cowgill, 1994; Hårsman & Quigley, 1995); Townshend, 2002).

Socio-economic segregation arises when people of different social classes settle into different areas largely because of differences in the socio-economic status of people (Borjas, 1997; Jurgen, 1998). Certain areas become exclusive domains for the well-off whilst others are

dominated by the working class, those living on low-incomes and or who are socially excluded members of society. Indeed, immigrants and others low-income groups have a propensity to reside in segregated areas, precisely because many of them cannot afford accommodation in high status residential areas, as a consequence of their own socio-economic status.

Finally, ethnic segregation occurs when people of different ethnicity, cultures and religions are significantly represented by choice (individual preferences) or conditioned because they happen to belong to a group, e.g., through discrimination (Hårsman & Quigley, 1995; Molina, 1997; Hårsman, 2006; Bråmås, *et al.*, 2006).

6.1.3.1 Where Somalis Stand vis-à-vis Dimensions and Types of Residential Segregation in Stockholm:

With regard to the dimensions of residential segregation, ‘clustering’ and ‘concentration’ seem applicable to the Somali case in Stockholm. This is because Somalis tend to ‘cluster’ in the two adjacent suburbs of Rinkeby and Tensta, where the ‘concentration’ of immigrants is very high in relation to most suburbs in the City (for maps, see Appendix 2). By virtue of living in these suburbs, Somalis are isolated from better amenities, opportunities, and resources that affect social and economic integration (cf. Massey & Denton, 1988; 1989).

I would argue that ‘evenness’ and ‘centralisation’ as measures of the degree of residential segregation do not apply to Somalis in Stockholm. ‘Evenness’ is ruled out in the sense that Somalis are concentrated in the suburbs of Rinkeby and Tensta. In relation to centralisation, central business districts (CBD) in Swedish urban areas tend to be exclusive and in high demand, not least because of their closeness to shopping and cultural life, among others, hence, less segregated. The number of Somalis in Stockholm’s CBD is thus very insignificant in relation to the City’s periphery.

With respect to the types of residential segregation, socio-economic- and ethnic residential segregation are relevant to Somalis in Stockholm as opposed to demographic segregation. These two types of residential segregation also overlap in the case of Somalis – a reason why their segregation is explained both by their socio-economic position vis-à-vis members of the host society, as well as, by the fact that they belong to an ethnic group different from that of the majority group.

6.2 The Negative Impact of Residential Segregation

The discussion on residential segregation that impinges upon Somali integration in Sweden has Rinkeby and Tensta – two adjacent suburbs located in the Northern part of Stockholm City – as its backdrop. Rinkeby and Tensta are not only overwhelmingly inhabited by immigrants (ca 90% and 86% respectively, USK, 2008), but they are also home to the majority of Somalis

in Stockholm. Described often as ‘problem areas’, these suburbs entail multiple problems for Somalis (as for other inhabitants), especially, from an integration perspective.

The most commonly endorsed problems or themes associated with Rinkeby and Tensta by the research respondents (Somalis and Swedish official alike) were: (1) the lack of connectivity with the host population; (2) unemployment; (3) poor services in comparison to other suburbs e.g., Kungsholmen, Norrmalm, Södermalm, etc (for map, see Appendices 2 & 6); (4) high staff turnover in vital service areas (e.g., education, health, social services, etc); as well as, (5) perceived high crime rates.

6.2.1 The lack of Connectivity with the Host Population

To begin with, residential segregation hinders interaction between Somalis and members of the host population. As a consequence, Somalis have fewer opportunities to practice speaking Swedish, which is imperative for their integration in Sweden. The inability to acquire language competences also impacts on how they fare in education and the labour market (cf. Murdie & Borgegård, 1998).

Moreover, the lack of connectivity with members of the host society means that Somalis are excluded from the informal social networks of Swedes. These informal social networks (or

‘contacts’, as they are known) have become decisive, in that, it is often through recommendations by those in the individual’s informal networks that s/he acquires a job in the labour market. Connectivity with ‘native’ Swedes was also seen as vital, in that, it has the potential to break down barriers and enhance tolerance and understanding between people.

6.2.2 Unemployment

There is clear evidence that many who live in segregated areas are also unemployed. This is particularly true for Rinkeby and Tensta. In 2008, for example, nearly 9.4% of inhabitants in Rinkeby were ‘openly’ unemployed (i.e., as people who are unemployed and not engaged in education/training programmes); 19.6% of people receive social assistance; and a further 14% receive disability pensions in 2008 (USK, 2008). The corresponding statistics for Tensta was 9.5% (openly unemployed); 21.5% (received social assistance) and 12.7% (receive disability pensions). This can be compared with non-segregated suburbs like Norrmalm, Södermalm and Kungsholmen. In Norrmalm, for example, only 1% of its inhabitants received social assistance, and 4.5% disability pensions (USK, 2008). In Södermalm, people who received social assistance and disability benefits were 1.8% and 5.5% respectively. In Kungsholmen, the corresponding statistics were 1% and 4.8% respectively.

Moreover, between 2005 and 2007, only 49% of foreign-born persons were economically active in both Rinkeby and Tensta. Contrastingly, foreign-born persons in the non-segregated

suburbs of Kungsholmen, Norrmalm and Södermalm, the corresponding statistics were 69%, 65% and 65% respectively in terms of economic activity (SCB/USK, 2008). The above statistics are summarised in Table 6.1, below.

Table 6.1 Open Unemployment, Social Assistance, Disability Benefits and Economically Active Foreign-Born Persons.

	Open Unemployment (%)	Social Assistance (%)	Disability Benefits (%)	Economically Active Foreign- born Persons (%)
Rinkeby	9.4	19.6	14	49
Tensta	9.5	21.5	12.7	49
Norrmalm	2.1	1	4.5	69
Södermalm	2.7	1.8	5.5	65
Kungsholmen	2.5	1	4.8	69

Source: SCB/USK (2008)

Undoubtedly, unemployment entails a host of problems for any citizen. These may include physical and mental health problems (Gore, 1978; McCord & Freeman, 1990; Fang, *et al.*, 1998; Montgomery, *et al.*, 1999; Kivimäki, *et al.*, 2003) as well as, loss of income and social status (Bartley & Owen, 1996). This relationship can also be deduced from the above statistics. For example, because of the high rates of unemployment in Rinkeby and Tensta,

their inhabitants are more likely to be afflicted by loss of income and status (as they are ‘forced’ to live off social assistance, as a consequence). In addition, past research has also found that a relationship exists between residential segregation, high unemployment rates and high health risk problems (cf. Klinthall, M, 2008).

Furthermore, unemployment among adult immigrants is thought to have a socio-psychological impact on children in these suburbs. Indeed, a number of research respondents made connections between the perceived prevalence of high unemployment among [adult] Somalis to the negative impact that it has on their children. It was argued, for example, that parents who work, were predisposed to become good role models for their children, rather than parents who face unemployment. Irshad, a 41-year old male respondent asked this rhetorical question:

What impression will parents, relatives and neighbours who are unemployed and have nothing to do other than mill in and around suburb squares have on children? What will the children whose parents have never worked in Sweden say or feel in the company of their peers when they talk of their parents’ work or career, of the holidays they are planning or those destinations they have been to?

Irshad continues:

What about those other children, who by growing up in these suburbs, think of unemployment as something of a norm, and employment, as something unusual? That surely will have an impact on their

educational performance and career aspiration now,
and in the future.

Mona, a social worker at Rinkeby Social District reinforces some of Irshad's observations:

Unemployment has become normality here [meaning these suburbs]. The tradition to work has not taken root here. Social assistance which was intended as a temporary relief and specific to certain uninsured vulnerable groups in society has become the only source of income for many in these suburbs.

6.2.3 Poor public services

Among the numerous problems that residents in these suburbs were said to experience is poor and deteriorating public services. Public services in these suburbs were described as substandard, in relation to those provided elsewhere in the city (i.e., in less segregated areas). One example was in the area of education where a number of research respondents were convinced that the relative poor educational services in Rinkeby and Tensta reflected negatively on the educational performances of children in these suburbs (cf. Högdin, 2007).

Another issue of concern for the research respondents was the constant in-flow of newly arrived immigrant children who continually enroll in these schools. It was felt that this invariably lowered the standards of schools (and their performance) as more and more

resources, in terms of money and manpower, were often diverted to uplift the levels of the new arrivals at the expense of existing pupils.

Indeed, research respondents viewed education not only as pivotal for the integration of Somalis in Sweden, but also as a prime facilitator of social mobility. As Hanan, a 42 year old male respondent puts it:

To jolt ourselves from our present predicament, we as Somalis need to enroll into educational institutions in huge numbers.

6.2.4 High staff turn-over

Research respondents also alluded to the problem of high staff turn-over that contributed to deficient service provisions in Rinkeby and Tensta, especially, in the vital sectors like education, health and social services. The working conditions of teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers, etc, in these areas were often described as being less favourable than those of their counterparts in less segregated areas. One factor that contributed to this high staff turn-over was the ‘huge work-loads’ that those working in the areas had to contend with. Helena, an Immigration Officer who formerly worked in Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm recounts:

I can tell you, our work-load was double that of those in some social districts in this City and certainly those

of the surrounding municipalities in Greater Stockholm.

Eva, an official who counsels young unemployed immigrants in Rinkeby reaffirms:

I have lost count of how many of my colleagues left our Social Services Department since I started working here three years ago.

6.2.5 Perception of high crime rates

Another perceived disadvantage associated with Rinkeby and Tensta was the relatively high prevalence of crime in these areas in relation to other less segregated suburbs. There is evidence from Statistics Sweden's (SCB, 2007) to suggest that as being the case. SCB (2007) compared crimes committed in Rinkeby-Kista area (new administrative boundary) with that of the City of Stockholm (overall area). The evidence shows that in all the 22 crimes listed, Rinkeby-Kista led the City of Stockholm by 18 out of those 22 per in numbers/1000 (see Appendix 11).

Nonetheless, a number of Somali research respondents, particularly those who live in Rinkeby and Tensta, had different opinions. They argued the prevalence of relatively high crime rates in their suburbs vis-à-vis other areas in the city, had to do more with perception than reality. Indeed, some of these respondents said they felt 'safe' and 'secure' in Rinkeby and Tensta

than they would in Swedish dominated areas. One possible explanation was because they had friends and relatives in these particular suburbs. It had invariably less to do with crime rates in these suburbs contrary to other areas.

There were a number of contributing factors towards the negative image of the suburbs, the most prominent of which was the media portrayal of these areas. This was emphasised by a number of respondents. Among them was Abdiwahid, a 33 year old male respondent, who stated the following:

They say yobs here are on the loose and operate with impunity, terrorising inhabitants and visitors alike... by harassing people, snatching ladies' purses, mobile phones, and so on. However, I have not witnessed the crimes people have been talking about. Neither I nor anyone I know has been subjected to these kinds of crime. This whole saga of Rinkeby being crime prone is something manufactured by tabloids. There is no serious journalism involved, only their usual rumours and innuendos.

Mariam, a 30 year old female respondent, who once lived in Rinkeby but moved to a temporary accommodation in a hostel located in a popular inner-city residence (CBD), adds:

Outsiders may feel threatened or intimidated when they come to Rinkeby. This fear has more to do with hearsays and personal prejudices. I can confirm there is nothing to fear in Rinkeby. For me, Rinkeby was like home. I had many I could relate to in Rinkeby in a way that I cannot do in other areas.

Whatever the views of Rinkeby and Tensta by Somalis and other inhabitants maybe, what was imperative here was the perceptions of ‘native’ Swedes. If ‘native’ Swedes felt ‘threatened’ or ‘intimidated by the inhabitants of these suburbs or problems of crime (whether perceived or real), then that would be enough to deter them from moving ‘back’ into these areas as residents.

6.3 Individual Preference

Individual preference is a contributing factor that caused, maintained and perpetuated residential segregation between Somalis and Swedes. Individual preference here is construed to mean the desires and actions by Somalis of wanting to live in close proximity with one another. There were a number of factors that explained ‘individual preferences’ as being the main overriding reasons behind the residential segregation of Somalis. First, the fact that Somalis increasingly chose to settle in Stockholm and subsequently in segregated suburbs even though many of them had an option to live elsewhere (e.g., in the communes many of them moved from) was indicative of their ‘individual preferences’. Many of the Somalis who moved to Stockholm were initially resettled in other communes – mainly away from the major metropolitan regions under the ‘Whole of Swedish Strategy’ (*Hela Sverige Strategin*) – also known as Swedish Refugee Dispersal Policy (see below).

Many Swedish officials (respondents) were of the view that Somalis moved to Stockholm ‘without proper planning going into their decisions to do so’, to borrow the words of one official. Firstly, many Somalis was said to have moved on their own volition and without the coordination by, or approval of, officials either in the previous communes they moved from or in their ‘new’ commune (Stockholm). Indeed, some officials, who talked from their own professional experience, argued that many Somalis moved to Stockholm despite strong opposition from the authorities in the communes they moved from. This was because Somalis were abandoning an on-going introduction programme in place in those communes. These officials viewed induction programmes as something that was in the interest of Somalis (and their children).

Moreover, the abandonment of the ‘plans-in-place’ often entailed the simultaneous abandonment of many issues around that plan, e.g., apartments, introduction- and activation programmes for adults, schools and day care arrangement, etc. These plans were often elaborate and holistic in approach taking into consideration the needs of adults and children of immigrants simultaneously. Furthermore, resettlement also entailed finances; multi-agency cooperation; schools and kindergartens; Swedish language instructors for adults; home language tutors for children; the recruitment of teachers, etc. In other words, a lot of time and efforts went into resettling Somalis in the communes they were initially allocated to.

In the eyes of the majority of Swedish officials going against these ‘plans’ was, therefore, ‘regrettable’. To them Somalis were abandoning ‘ideal’ places from an integration viewpoint in relation to the suburbs they moved into in Stockholm. Abandoning a place that entailed a ‘better future’ and coming into what was clearly ‘problem areas’, was thus seen as illogical. As Göran, an official at Rinkeby Social District who coordinates refugee reception and their introduction into society alludes to:

Somalis may have moved to Stockholm without asking themselves whether the place they are moving to had a better or lower quality of life for themselves and their children in relation to the place they move(d) from.

It was also argued that once Somalis had moved to Stockholm, they still had alternative options to settle in other suburbs with relatively fewer immigrants than either Rinkeby or Tensta. This was because there were financial guarantees to people who could not afford their rents for diverse reasons. These include people who have no recourse to work-related benefits (e.g., pensions, unemployment-, maternity-, sick-, or disability benefits) because they have not met eligibility criteria for those benefits. Most refugees or immigrants who have not been in the country for a considerable amount of time, or those who have encountered ‘persistent’ long-term unemployment since arrival as a number of Somalis have done, would fall under the category of people who fail to accrue work-related benefits. Thus, unemployment, lack of income and ineligibility to work-related benefits does not necessarily entail those afflicted are devoid of any safety nets in Sweden. Indeed, the Social Services Act or *Socialtjänstlagen* (SOL) in Sweden guarantees that all people living legally in the country receive a basic

national minimum subsistence allowance (or social assistance) known as *Socialbidragsnorm* or simply as *Riksnorm*.

Nonetheless, this basic subsistence allowance is conditional. For example, an unemployed person has to demonstrate that s/he is actively seeking work or is engaged in some form of economic activities such as Swedish language instruction and other skills enhancement courses or training. If the individual is not able to be at the disposal of the labour market due to sickness, substance abuse, etc, s/he has to produce an updated medical record in the case of sickness and be willing to undergo rehabilitation in the case of substance abuse.

Third, the continued ‘insistence’ by some Somalis to reside in Rinkeby and Tensta, despite becoming or being aware of the negative consequences such areas entail for their own integration and those of their off-springs shows that Somalis have or are contributing to their own self-segregation. This was a reflection shared by Björn, who works as an employment advisor with the Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm:

Initial preference was one thing, but when the dust settled and people realised the problems inherent in the suburbs they came to settle in, one would have expected a change of heart. This does not seem to be the case with some Somalis in these areas. They continue to prefer to live here for some reason.

Other officials have also taken issue with the ‘the absence of a hankering’ or ‘desire to’ live in other areas by Somalis (deemed favourable from an integration viewpoint) as a clear indication that Somalis prefer to live in these segregated areas. Officials associated alternative or less segregated suburbs with such attributes as closer interaction with members of the host society, accessibility to better services, ‘brighter’ future for the residents and their offspring, amongst others. Yet Somalis did not [in the eyes of these officials] seem eager to move to these alternative suburbs.

6.3.1 Differentiation: Different Reasons, Different Circumstances

Although the overwhelming majority of Somalis who came to Stockholm did so out of preference, it was imperative not to assume that all Somalis ‘preferred’ to live in close proximity with one another. Indeed, there were clearly two other groups who came to Stockholm for different reasons and under different circumstances, as identifiable from the research data, viz.: ‘officially accepted respondents’ (a group that was accepted by Stockholm Commune from the outset), and ‘family re-union respondents’ (a group that came to Stockholm or Sweden for a ‘family reunion’). These two groups had little or no ‘preference’ of where they eventually settled but were more or less compelled by the authorities or their circumstances (in the case of family reunions) to move into or settle in Stockholm. To elaborate we will first of all, look at the group that ‘preferred’ to reside in Stockholm before we discuss these other two groups.

6.3.1.1 ‘Preference Respondents’

This group had the experience of living outside Stockholm metropolitan area prior to being granted residency status in Sweden. Indeed, they were part of the relatively large Somali group that came to Sweden in the early 1990s. This was a period when refugee reception centres blossomed all over the country, thanks in part to the huge influxes of refugees into the country particularly from the former Yugoslavia. Refugees were placed in centres across the whole of Sweden, from Malmö in the south to Kiruna in the north (for map, see Appendix 9).

When these Somalis were granted permits to stay, they were either placed in the communes where their refugee centres were located, or in other communes outside the major metropolitan areas such as Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö (in line with Swedish Refugee Dispersal Policy). However, Somalis subsequently moved to Stockholm after spending some time in their communes of placement. Moreover, the move to Stockholm almost always entailed an automatic move into Rinkeby and Tensta, two adjacent immigrant clusters which also happened to be home for the overwhelming majority of ‘Stockholm’ Somalis.

6.3.1.2 ‘Officially Accepted Respondents’

This group had little or no experience of living in other communes other than the fact that some of them came through refugee reception centres located there, before the authorities

placed them in Stockholm. This group thus comprised of people who were accepted by the Stockholm Commune for resettlement from the outset. Undeniably, there were people among this group who wanted to live in Stockholm and who, luckily, were asked to move there because Stockholm Commune was planning to accept a certain number of refugees in that given year or period to which they became part. By the same token, there may have been others in this group who involuntarily ended up in Stockholm.

6.3.1.3 ‘Family Re-unions Respondents’

Most of those involved here were women. Indeed, it was common for men to seek refuge in Sweden first and to reunite with their families later. Evidence from the respondents in this research confirms this trend. All but one of the nine Somali women participants came to Sweden to be re-united with their husbands. The other came as a child who accompanied her mother and other siblings to join her father, who was already living in Sweden.

Whilst some in this group came directly to Stockholm (from Somalia, etc), others did spend some of their initial years in Sweden in other communes together with their families before they moved (with their families) to Stockholm. One notable factor that affected the latter group was that, they had little say in the decisions that led them and or their families to move to Stockholm. In most cases, the ‘motivating’ factor(s) for the relocation on the part of these women to Stockholm was normally tied to their families’ ‘social’, ‘cultural’ and ‘religious’

needs that could not be obtained from the communes they moved from. Indeed, decisions involving the move to Stockholm were taken by men on behalf of the whole family, including these women. This was unsurprising in the sense that Somali women have traditionally played the complementary role of supporting their husbands and children. Unfortunately, their needs and own careers do suffer greatly because of this ‘sacrificial’ role in the family.

To consider this small sample as an example, the women interviewed have been in Sweden for a considerable length of time – enough for them to individually establish themselves in terms of acquiring the Swedish language, educating themselves to an appropriate level and obtaining employment. However, most of these women (six out of nine) seemed to have prioritised the needs of others in the family (e.g., their children and husbands) over their own personal needs. This has undoubtedly acted as an obstacle to their integration process in Sweden. From the deliberation of participants, and examples of some of the women interviewed the familial priorities that seemed to preoccupy many Somali women in Sweden included conception, mothering, and child-care.

6.3.2 The Incentives for Choosing a ‘Somalian’ Community

For Somalis, there were a number of incentives for choosing to reside in close proximity with one another. Indeed, a great deal of the deliberation or ‘preference’ for segregated areas by Somalis focuses on the advantages accrued by living in those areas. Whilst the significance of

some incentives (e.g., some of those that motivated Somalis to move to Stockholm initially) may have faded, the importance of others continues to apply or persist.

Among the most recurrent themes endorsed in highlighting the reasons of preferring to live in close proximity with one another included: “birds of the same feathers flock together”; “readily available information”; “fled Isolation”; “having large Families”; “religious factors”; and, the availability of a Somali ‘enclave economy’.

6.3.2.1 ‘Birds of the same feathers’ flock together

For many participants, there was nothing unique for members of a certain group (e.g., national, ethnic, cultural, etc) in wanting to live in close proximity to one another. Sentiments expressed by participants included: ‘this was natural’; ‘there was nothing unique in this...’; ‘this was a universal phenomenon’, among others, in order to drive home their point. In other words, it was perceived by the participants that it was ‘natural’ for immigrants to look for people from their ethnic community or country of origin when they first come to a foreign country whose language, values, culture, and religion were often different from their own.

The following account by Abdirashid, a 51 year old male respondent who came to Sweden in the 1970s reflects on the above:

When I first came here, some decades ago, the first thing I asked for, and I thought was of importance and a matter of urgency for me, if you may allow me to recall, was where I could locate my fellow Somali landmen.

Sara, a social worker at Skärholmen District of Stockholm, says:

If people moves to a place it is only natural that they seek to live where their countrymen live. Even Swedes do that when they are abroad. It gives *us* a feeling of security.

Elisabet, a migration official who earlier worked in Rinkeby Social District reinforces the above:

If I were to move abroad and knew there were many Swedes in a particular area, I would probably have done the same as Somalis are doing here.

6.3.2.2 Readily available information

Another important advantage accrued by moving into Stockholm was the acquisition of readily available information provided by fellow ethnic Somalis living there. Undoubtedly, many Somalis suffered from language disadvantages in the beginning. Their connection with

members of the host community in terms of joint socialising and recreational sessions, educational and labour market was often severely curtailed as a result. Apart from the bureaucratic assistance they obtain from officials, the main reliable source of information they needed could only be obtained from members of their ethnic group.

Axiomatically, when one is still relatively new, many issues are complex and problematic. Where and how does the individual start from? Where could s/he seek social and economic assistance? How, where and who to contact for vital services? On starting language courses, which schools or localities have the best reputation in terms of how they deal with newcomers, impart knowledge, etc? What about those Somalis who preceded newcomers: What were their experiences? How did they go about establishing themselves in the new environment? How could one make headway at all, given the enormity of the difficulties (e.g., lack of acceptance, unemployment, etc) that Somalis, in general, faced?

These were vital questions many newcomers wrestled with. The answers to these questions provided the information that they needed to access the opportunities provided for them in their new society. Undoubtedly, in the absence of such vital information, it would have taken even longer for the individuals concerned to establish themselves in Sweden. As one participant puts it, '*go there*', '*do that*'... were the usual phrases that 'direct' newcomers to find their place in the new society – thanks largely to their fellow country-men who preceded them. In other words those who preceded the newcomers often furnish the latter with

accessible information. It was, as it were, fellow countrymen offering a helping hand to their compatriots. Hirab, a 55 year old male respondent, reaffirms:

... regarding the vitality of the right information, the individual, on his own cannot disentangle the information labyrinth... its sheer enormity, and its 'piecemeal' manner... all these cannot, reasonably, be tackled by the newcomer on his or her own. That is why it is important to have a fellow countryman who has already being through the same experience. It does ease a lot, especially, with regard to the very initial (re)settlement period.

Again participants were keen to point out that this was not something specific to Somalis but one that was a universal phenomenon.

6.3.2.3 Combating Isolation

More concretely, a few respondents indicated that they moved from smaller communes to Stockholm to seek the company of family and friends since they felt isolated in their existing communes. For example, Barni, a 36 year female respondent, and her children came to a provincial town in Northern Sweden to join her husband who had been previously resettled in that town. After a year's stay in the town (i.e., from the time of their [family] reunification), this family decided to move to Stockholm. The reason for their move to Stockholm was related to the isolation they felt in the city they moved from. Barni recalls:

I felt isolated ... my whole family felt, this indescribable sense of alienation. There were no Somalis in nearly the whole city. In fact we knew of only three Somali families who lived in smaller centres several miles from where we lived. They too were preparing to move to other towns. We simply could not continue living in that city any longer because we felt so isolated.

6.3.2.4 Large Families

Moreover, household type and composition of Somali families often compelled some Somalis to ‘prefer’ areas where they could be ‘tolerated’. As argued, Somalis with large families would be more comfortable in living in immigrant dominated suburbs than in areas where native Swede predominate. That was one reason, for example, why both Muktar (44 year old male respondent) and Diriye (39 years old male respondent] moved with their families to Stockholm and subsequently to Rinkeby. Their families comprised of eight and nine children respectively.

Indeed, large families of these sizes appear anomalous to Swedes, where the typical [Swedish] family is often allegorised as ‘the’ couple with two children (at most!) and their three ‘V’s – *Vovve*, *Volvo* and *Villa*. *Vovve* is a puppy in colloquial Swedish. However, there were also practical reasons why rearing large families in Sweden could be prohibitive, at least as far as native Swedes were concerned. First, Swedish partners were more likely to be employed rendering a large family impracticable. Furthermore, reasons such as overcrowding, financial

burden and the scarcity of time all weigh in decisions ‘native’ Swedish parents make to plan their families.

Contrastingly, many Somali parents who opt for large families, seemingly, do not have the same considerations that conditioned Swedes to plan their families around their careers or their contemporary lifestyle. Indeed, some Somalis were ‘metaphysical’ about planning the size or composition of their families. Diriye had this to say on family planning, for example:

It is God who provides for his creatures from their cradle to their grave. It is He who sustains all lives on earth, both human and plants.

6.3.2.5 Religious factors

In Rinkeby and Tensta, Somalis have formed ethnic organisations, and created ethnic-oriented institutions such as ‘make-shift’ mosques and informal religious schools where they teach their children how to write, read and memorise the Quran. All this was an attempt to recreate a sense of community in the new environment where Somali religious life could flourish. This acted further as a magnet that drew more Somalis into these areas.

Informal Quranic schools are popular with the overwhelming majority of Somali parents since they view religious education as a religiously ordained obligation. Quranic schools, known in

Somali as *dugsi* are run informally and staffed by religious instructors called *mu'aalims* (teachers). The *mu'aalim's* traditional role also includes that of discipline. *Mu'aalims* also have the tacit approval of parents to discipline their children. Some corporal punishment or intimidation may often be involved in the effort to inculcate moral imperatives into pupils.

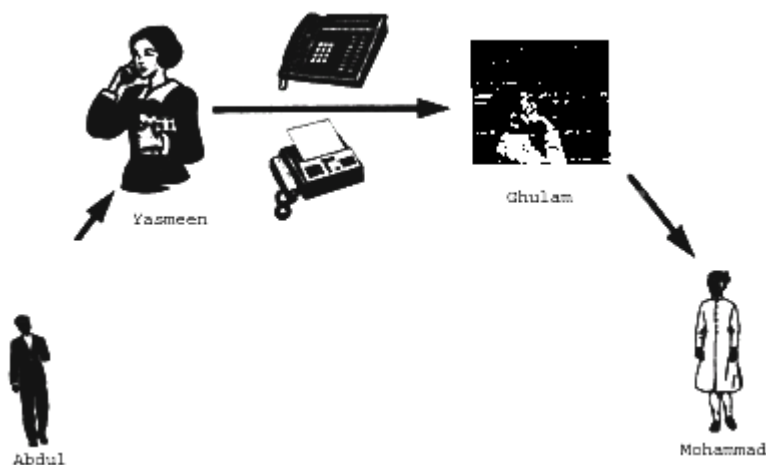
An implicit assumption amongst some Somali research participants, who are themselves parents, was that Swedish learning institutions (e.g., public day-care centres and schools) were engaged in some kind of indoctrination that 'turned' children against their religion, culture and even their parents. They saw it, therefore, incumbent upon themselves to undertake 'counter-indoctrination measures' to save their children from 'an impending and imminent peril of assimilation', to use the paraphrase of one Somali female respondent. Quranic schools and their *Mu'aalims* thus play the important role of working towards attaining the 'counter-indoctrination measures' Somali families seek for their children in Sweden.

6.3.2.6 'Somalian enclave economy'

One fundamental cultural and religious need that attracts Somalis to Rinkeby and Tensta include 'traditional' goods, such as *Halal* food or products, clothes, cultural-specific accessories, etc. As this research reveals, it is in these areas where a small Somali enclave economy is beginning to blossom.

Indeed, it is in these suburbs where one finds the *Hawala* (a ‘semi-formal’, systematic) banking system. Somalis use *Hawala* to send remittances to their relatives in Somalia and other places of the world where formal banking hardly reaches. The *Hawala* is renowned for its speed, efficient and reliability. As a number of these Somalis concurred, money sent to relatives in the most remote corners of Somalia or neighbouring countries can be received in a matter of hours. To understand how the *Hawala* works, we draw from a recent example by Interpol (as shown in Figure 6.1). Interpol (2010) argues that trust between the sender (Abdul) and the *Hawala* agent (Yasmeen) is crucial. Once that trust has been established, Yasmeen contacts the *Hawala* agent (Ghulam) at the other end (e.g., Abdul’s country of origin) and instructs him (Ghulam) to pay the money (received from Abdul) to his relative (Mohamad). When the transaction is finalized, Abdul receives a ‘text-message’ that confirms the money he sent has been paid to Mohammad.

Figure 6.1: How the *Hawala* Transaction Works.



Source: Adopted from Interpol (2010). See Bibliography for ‘Link’.

Somalis also engage in *Ayuta*, a cooperative system where people get together to lend each other money. These cooperative comprise of two to a dozen people, who agree to lend each other money. When these groups are initially formed, the candidate who is seen as having the most pressing needs receives the loan that is provided by the rest of the group. Each candidate contributes the same amount. The remaining candidates then wait for their turn with only one of them receiving the agreed amount at the end of each month. Indeed, *Ayuta* is a rotating system. It is purely dependent and built upon trust between members. It continues until the group dissolves itself.

One reason why *Ayuta* is popular with Somalis is because few financial institutions lend money to Somalis given many of them lack security against a loan (e.g., property; viable employment or income, etc). *Ayuta* is the only way individual Somalis (e.g., those unemployed, on benefits, etc) can get hold of or borrow a substantial sum of money at a given point in time. *Ayuta* is also popular from a religious viewpoint because no interest is paid on money borrowed this way.

6.4 Socioeconomic Factors

Residential segregation between Somalis and Swedes was also explained by socio-economic differences. Among the recurrent themes endorsed by the majority of research participants as factors that inhibited Somalis from residential integration (with Swedes) included: (a) the relative lack of language competences, and education; (b) their poor participation in the labour market; and, (c) the relative short duration of their residence in Sweden. Other factors pertaining to socioeconomic differences between Swedes and Somalis were the roles played by *class* and *social distance* (in an ethnically hierarchal society). In the latter case, Swedes enjoy a favourable position in relation to Somalis who were placed lowest in a hierarchy based on ranking Swedes with all minority groups in Sweden, including, the more established ones. The social position a group enjoys in the hierarchy thus determines its residential patterns vis-à-vis those of native Swedes.

6.4.1 Language and Education

The acquisition of language competence and education were seen as clear imperative in the overall integration of Somalis in Sweden. Axiomatically, many respondents regarded these resources as crucial for Somalis to attain upward social mobility in Sweden. It was through upward social mobility, they argued, that Somalis could, for example, attain residential integration, all things being equal. However, many respondents were of the view that Somalis, in general, lacked sufficient language- (including cultural) competences. Moreover, their

education levels were also seen as low comparative to ‘native’ Swedes, as well as, the more established immigrant groups in Sweden. These also affected their socioeconomic status which in turn impacted on their residential patterns vis-à-vis those of native Swedes.

Indeed, language was seen a prerequisite to the integration of Somalis (and to immigrants, in general). As many research participants have put it, *it is the key to everything*. It facilitates cultural understanding and social connectivity with the host society. Through a good command of the Swedish language, Somalis are, for example, likelier to acquire reasonable educational attainment and subsequently gain a greater foothold in the Swedish labour market, and hence, potential residential integration with the majority population. Likewise, education was seen as an important component of integration. However, it was argued that the educational levels of Somalis were low in comparison to the host society. Furthermore, many Somalis were said to have ‘stuck’ to their previous qualifications accrued from abroad, without supplementing those qualifications to suit to Swedish conditions – which in turn impacted on their labour market participation.

6.4.2 Labour market situation

A connection was also made between labour market participation of Somalis and their residential segregation in Stockholm. Because the labour market participation of Somalis in Sweden was relatively low, it was unsurprising, therefore, that they were residentially

segregated. Indeed, a major impediment to the integration of Somalis in Sweden was unemployment (see Integrationsverket, 1999; Carlsson, 2006). The unemployment Somalis suffer was said to be widespread, persistent and long-term. Moreover, a relatively high proportion of Somalis have yet to secure a single job since they arrived in Sweden 15-20 years ago. Furthermore, the prospect of these long-term unemployed Somalis securing employment in Sweden both in the near or foreseeable future was deemed slim not least because of changes in the labour market in recent decades.

Indeed, the changing nature of jobs was singled out as contributing to this dire situation. The jobs that are being created in the Swedish economy are now less labour intensive and require a highly skilled labour force. This scenario was precipitated by structural changes that occurred to the Swedish economy towards the end of 1990s. Structural changes in the Swedish economy have resulted in a decrease in labour intensive jobs (i.e., demand for low-skilled jobs) and an increase in more skilled jobs. This is where Somalis are disadvantaged since they have yet to keep pace with these changes. The changing nature of the Swedish economy requires constant readjustment in which people are required to acquire new skills or upgrade their existing knowledge base.

Moreover, the nature of jobs for the limited number of Somalis who work does not provide the rewards necessary to change their current residential patterns. This was because they perform jobs whose tenure was less secure, i.e., jobs that were casual, part-time, temporary and often

poorly paid. Indeed, a number of respondents argued that greater labour market participation by Somalis would not necessarily improve their housing mobility. As Eva, a youth employment adviser with the Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm puts it:

The jobs that mattered are those that enabled people to integrate residentially with Swedes. They are the types of jobs that had to be rewarding in terms of pay and security. Clearly, under current circumstances, these types of jobs seem to be out of reach for many Somalis.

6.4.3 Length of Residence Issues

The length of time a person has been in Sweden was seen as decisive for one to integrate residentially with the host community (cf. Le Grande & Szulkin, 2002). Accordingly, for immigrants like Somalis to establish themselves in segments of the housing market (i.e., as homeowners or owner occupiers), they would normally need to live in Sweden for a considerable length of period.

Indeed, it requires a considerable duration for people to establish themselves in the housing market even in the best of circumstances, irrespective of whether one is an immigrant or not. This was underscored in the following sentiments by Eriksson, a social worker with the Märsta Social District of Stockholm:

Even for those Swedes, many of whom were not born with a silver spoon in their mouths, contrary to

the misgivings about them by immigrants ... even for them [Swedes] it would require a considerable amount of time before they could own their own apartments or houses. They would as a rule go first to school, work hard, save for their first down payment and only then consider whether or not they would really be able to commit to or sustain a mortgage that could tie them for *another* considerable amount of time.

When it came to Somalis, the majority of them have been in Sweden for what amount to be a relatively short period. A great part of this very short period was also spent on the quest to acquire language and educational competences. Indeed, even in the best of circumstances, the attainment of adequate human capital resources and the subsequent realisation of employment were bound to take a relatively long period of time.

Some respondents were skeptical that first-generation Somalis would ever attain residential integration with 'native' Swedes given their contemporary socioeconomic status. To these research participants, the length of time an individual needed to 'truly' integrate residentially, could only be measured 'in terms of generations' and that was bound to be a long time. Hassan, a 37 year old male respondent, went even further by arguing that residential integration with Swedes was only plausible through assimilation. Says Hassan:

I believed a true, complete or total residential integration can only be achieved if and when Somalis were to assimilate. We still have a few generations to go before such integration can be obtained.

6.4.4 Class, Social Distance and Residential Segregation

In the research interviews, the notions of *class*, *social distance* and *ethnicity hierarchies* in relation to socio-economic status and residential- integration or segregation of Somalis vis-à-vis the majority society were also highlighted. Indeed, class and ethnicity were often seen as closely bounded phenomena that impacted on the residential patterns of Somalis and Swedes. Both phenomena had an influence on where people settled; whom one associates with; who to choose as neighbours; what schools children attended; what mode of transport people used or had access to, etc.

The overarching argument was that Somalis and Swedes followed different residential patterns because they belonged to separate social class groups – in which Swedes were portrayed as the higher social group and Somalis as the lower social group. Here is where the notions of *Social distance* and *ethnic hierarchy* were introduced into the discussion. In this ethnic rank order, the ‘distance’ between Somalis and Swedes were said to be the ‘furthest’ in relation to many other communities in Sweden. Björn, who works as employment advisor with the Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm explains:

There is a sort of pyramid in which immigrants like Somalis were represented on the lowest spectrum whilst Swedes and the other more established immigrant groups on the higher strata... with native Swedes topping the stratum.

This was in keeping with earlier studies that show that the social position a group enjoys in the [ethnic] hierarchy determines its residential patterns vis-à-vis those of native population (see Hagendoorn & Pepel, 2003). Indeed, to many research participants, residential patterns by social class and ethnic hierarchy seemed predictable with Swedes settling in the more affluent, reputable suburbs, whilst Somalis in the less reputable, segregated suburbs.

Although this hierarchy was discussed in relation to residential segregation/integration, it could also be applied to many areas such as education, income, employment, health, life quality, etc. It was thus arguable that Somalis were starting from a lower hierarchal position in relation to many, if not all, of the socioeconomic factors selected for deliberation in this section (and in other parts of this thesis) in comparison to ‘native’ Swedes and the more established immigrant groups in Sweden. It should be noted though, that discussion overlooked the existence of ‘poorer’ Swedes, and the fact all Swedes do not belong to one social class.

6.4.4.1.1 ‘Extricate Yourself by Making a Housing Career’

The suburbs Somalis currently reside in (Rinkeby and Tensta) were in themselves seen as obstacles to their socioeconomic integration in Sweden. Hence, for Somalis to integrate residentially with ‘native Swedes’, they *had* to extricate themselves from these segregated areas and move to other more desirable areas or suburbs in other parts of the city. Desirable

suburbs, here, connoted those with a majority of ‘native Swede’, deemed also as affluent areas and with better reputations. Also noted was that, suburbs with at least a 50:50 native-immigrant ratio or composition were viewed satisfactorily from an [residential] integration viewpoint by a number of research respondents.

For many respondents, ‘total’ residential integration with Swedes, as illustrated by the above quotes, was unattainable under current circumstances, given the many problems Somalis encountered in Sweden. Moreover, integration, not least residential integration, is seldom achieved at once. It occurs in stages and is often contingent upon the simultaneous attainment of other types of integration, e.g., acculturation and labour market integration, among others.

Concretely, one way Somalis could ‘extricate themselves’ from their current residentially segregated status and move to other more desirable suburbs was by ‘making’ a housing ‘career’. Some used the terms ‘housing career’ and ‘housing mobility’ interchangeably. Following the precedents of other non-Somali immigrants, making a housing ‘career’ often entailed buying an apartment and becoming owner-occupiers in other suburbs or parts of the city that were less segregated. In this way these non-Somali immigrants could ‘extricate themselves’ from areas like Rinkeby and Tensta, to use the paraphrase of one research respondent.

Indeed, Rinkeby was particularly talked of as an example of suburbs or places where immigrants traditionally stayed ‘temporarily’ until such a time when they were able to move to the other relatively more reputable suburbs of their choice. However, when it came to Somalis, it was argued, their stay or presence in Rinkeby has already taken a more quasi-permanent or permanent status with little or no prospect for them to ‘extricate themselves’ to areas or suburbs where they could integrate residentially with ‘native’ Swedes. Göran, an official at Rinkeby who coordinates refugee reception and their introduction into society, sums up:

Rinkeby has functioned as a sort of temporary encampment where different immigrants groups have in the past come and gone. It has always functioned as a place where people settled down at first, acquired education, gained employment and then moved on to other areas within the city. However, I have a feeling that Somalis are stuck here and it may take them a very, very long time before they would be able to move to other areas.

As can be deduced from Göran’s assessment, Rinkeby has functioned as a sort of springboard from where various immigrant groups had come to settle initially but subsequently left for other more reputable, less segregated suburbs. Indeed, Göran’s sentiments represented the kind of widespread pessimism, especially among Swedish officials, about the prospects of Somalis moving out of suburbs like Rinkeby in the foreseeable future, thereby, following the precedents set by earlier immigrants before them who had ‘come and gone’, to use the words of one respondent, in reference to this suburb.

There was, however, another dimension in the argument that did not come to the fore. Officials like Göran did not seem to distinguish between labour migrants (a great portion of whom were of European stock) and refugee migrants who came onto the scenario much later. Moreover, Göran and others made no reference to the fact that labour migrants came at a time when the economy was booming and when immigrants could make housing ‘careers’ with relative ease as opposed to refugees whose circumstances were fundamentally different from the former.

It would be difficult for recent arrivals, whose arrival coincided with the economic downturn and a restructured economy where the abundance of labour intensive manufacturing and industrial jobs no longer obtained; and, who are more likely to be unemployed than not, to make housing ‘careers’.

All in all, as the respondents argued, there were many socioeconomic differences between the two communities to warrant class- or ethnic based residential segregation. They pointed to the great disparity in the residential opportunities open to the two communities which flowed from differences in their socioeconomic positions in society. These included differences in human capital resources (e.g., language and education), income and employment (including differences in occupation or the nature of jobs). It was, therefore, no coincidence that Swedes were better predisposed socioeconomically since they had access to better paying job and greater spending powers in line with their lifestyles (or social class). In short, Swedes had the

power to influence their own destinies with regard to where to settle (e.g., type of suburbs) and who to associate with (e.g., what type of neighbours to have). By contrast Somalis were considered disadvantaged. Many remained unemployed and on public support. Those few who did work ended up in unskilled occupations with low remuneration and less secure tenure. All these, in turn, have made it difficult for Somalis to residentially integrate with Swedes and vice versa.

6.5 Unintended Consequences from Policy Changes

This section provides a background context to demonstrate how a number of unintended consequences that derive from the changes in policy can impact on the residential patterns of immigrants and ‘native’ Swedes. It also shows how these changes, which preceded the arrival of Somalis into the Swedish scene, affected their residential patterns vis-à-vis the ‘native’ Swedes.

Indeed, specific policy changes in housing, immigration and immigrant integration that took place between 1960 and 1990 have had a negative consequence on the residential patterns of residents in the Stockholm metropolitan area. In particular, attention will be focused on the ‘unintended’ consequence that resulted from the One Million Housing Programme (known in Swedish as *Miljönprogrammet*). This programme was initiated in 1965 and ended in the mid 1970s. It aimed to eradicate housing shortages in the metropolitan areas. The reason why large

metropolitan regions were the focal points of the One Million Housing Programme was because it was in these areas where housing shortages were most acute. Pertaining to Swedish immigration and immigrant integration policies, the research looks at the consequences that resulted from (a) the policy change from labour migration to refugee migration from the mid 1970s, and (b) changes that resulted from the abandonment of the so called *Whole Swedish Strategy*, commonly known as Swedish Refugee Dispersal Policy in the Mid-1990s.

Needless to say, these policies were often designed and implemented with good intentions. Nonetheless, in line with existing literature (see Särnbratt, 2006; Roos & Gelotte, 2004; Lövgren, 2002; Murdie & Borgegård, 1998), the emphasis from this research reinforces that all these policies had some unintended consequences that further generated, maintained and reproduced residential separation between native Swedes and immigrants (including Somalis) in Stockholm.

6.5.1 The One Million Housing Programme

This was an ambitious housing programme project. This followed a decision by the Swedish parliament in 1965 to construct one million housing units from 1965 to 1975 (Hall & Vidén, 2005). The One Million Programme was very much embedded in the Swedish social welfare system, and driven through by the ruling Social Democratic Party (Hall & Vidén, 2005). The aims of the programme were as follows: (1) to eradicate homelessness; (2) to ensure that

people acquired decent homes at reasonable non-market rents or purchase for owner-occupier in certain areas; and, (3) to protect citizens from the excesses of the market (see Hall & Vidén, 2005, Roos & Gelotte, 2004).

Indeed, many commentators link housing initiative to what is often dubbed the Golden Age of the Swedish Welfare State in the 1960s. This was a period when Sweden witnessed unprecedented, sustained economic and industrial growth. As Coronel (2002:1) states, it was a period when 'the Swedish social democratic model managed to successively deliver its promises of low unemployment, low inflation, and a relatively egalitarian distribution of wealth'. The prevalence of acute housing shortage, particularly in the larger metropolitan regions where many industries were also located (see Anderson & Solid, 2003), had the potentiality of derailing this positive economic trends, hence, the One Million Housing Programme initiative.

In the end, the Programme achieved its target of constructing one million dwellings and even surpassing it by a few thousand units. The final production comprised of both low rise and high rise buildings (see Roos & Gelotte, 2004). Thanks to the One Million Programme, the face of many city landscapes were transformed: some suburbs were built entirely from scratch; for others, it entailed expanding existing dwelling units, increasing their numbers as well as modernising them; and, for other it meant the demolition of old buildings and neighbourhoods, and replacing them with new units. Moreover, office blocks to house essential welfare state

services were built in these suburbs as an integral part of the Programme. There were schools, health centres, local administration offices, social services, social security offices, employment exchange offices, police stations, etc. Furthermore road links, shopping centres, and recreation spaces were all incorporated into the planning of the Programme and its implementation. The underground rail system was expanded to connect these suburbs to other parts of the city.

Indeed, the new suburbs that sprang up were almost ‘self-sufficient’ – towns within towns – complete with all vital amenities. They were soon to be called *ABC-Område* or the ABC-Areas, where A stood for *Arbete* (work), B for *Bostad* for (housing/accommodation) and C for *Centrum* (centres/square). Thus one could essentially work, live and shop in the same suburb.

6.5.1.1 The Impact of the One Million Programme

All in all, the One Million Programme project was positively responded to by the population, particularly, by those families and workers who lived in overcrowded conditions. However, as time went by the ‘aura’ surrounding some of the ABC areas began to fade. One factor that led to this more negative assessment was the ‘tipping-out’ of Swedes from these suburbs, among them, Rinkeby and Tensta (see below). These two suburbs are of interest to this research project because they are now home to the overwhelming majority of Somalis in Stockholm.

6.5.2 Immigration and Integration Policies

6.5.2.1 From Labour to Refugee Migration

Changes in immigration and refugee dispersal policies also had a further influence on how the residential patterns in some part of Stockholm were ultimately shaped. Indeed, the development of residential segregation in Stockholm was partly a result of the movement of relatively large numbers of immigrants into some of its suburbs from the mid 1970s onwards. This was partly caused by the shift of focus on Swedish Immigration policy from labour to refugee migration.

Undoubtedly, there were significant differences between labour migrants and refugees. First and foremost, labour migrants who came to Sweden were often relatively young able bodied men with no or few family members accompanying them into the country. Often, they migrated with the intention to work, make money and return to their countries of origins. Moreover, labour migrants were regarded as guest workers – temporary sojourners – by the host community. They were seen more as an asset than a liability to society, and were, certainly, viewed and held in a more favourably light than refugee migrants.

Refugees, on the other hand, fled from political persecution, social-, economic-, and environmental deprivations, among others, in their countries of origin. They came to seek

refuge and settle down in Sweden. In contrast to labour migrants, refugees would later be joined by the families once they were granted permission to stay in Sweden. Moreover, the economic participation of refugees were low in comparison, with many becoming dependent on social assistance and other non-income-related welfare benefits for their maintenance – a phenomenon that makes them unpopular in the host society.

6.5.2.2 The ‘Abandonment’ of the Swedish Refugee Dispersal Policy

As part of the immigrant integration policy, the Refugee Dispersal Policy was an important policy tool that was employed to disperse refugee across the whole of Sweden, and, in particular, away from metropolitan regions where immigrants were concentrated in a limited number of geographical areas. The concentration of migrants was seen as having a negative impact on the integration of immigrants (see Andersson & Solid, 2003), as well as community cohesion.

The Swedish Refugee Dispersal policy was ‘abandoned’ in the mid 1990s, although it still functioned as a guiding principal for decisions on refugee resettlement as late as 1998 (see Borgegård, *et al.*, 1998)

6.5.3 The ‘Tipping’ of Swedes from Rinkeby and Tensta: An Unintended Consequence

One consequence of these policy changes was called ‘*tipping*’. ‘Tipping’ occurs when new immigrants enter a neighbourhood in such significant numbers that earlier residents (here Swedes) opt to leave (see Schelling, 1971). In our case, ‘tipping’ refers to the flight of Swedes from suburbs like Rinkeby and Tensta – now home to the overwhelming majority of the Somali population in Stockholm. The consequence of ‘tipping’ has led to the steady creation of residential vacancies in these areas, which created further opportunities for housing agents to steer ethnic minority applicants into these segregated areas. Indeed, although, Somalis came onto the scene much later, and certainly after the ‘tipping’ of ‘native’ Swedes from Rinkeby and Tensta had already occurred, it was nonetheless, the creation of residential vacancies as a result of ‘tipping’ that led many Somalis to live in these areas when they moved into Stockholm.

6.5.3.1 Reasons for ‘tipping’

Arguably, there was a slow but steady ‘displacement’ of ‘native’ Swedes in these suburbs as immigrants moved in over time. The most common recurrent reason associated by the majority of research respondents with the ‘tipping’ of Swedes from these suburbs, was the socioeconomic ‘elevation’ of Swedes. Indeed, the general consensus among research respondents was that the socioeconomic status of Swedes improved, thanks to the Swedish Welfare State which helped them make the ‘apparent leap from working- to middle class’, to

use the paraphrase of one Swedish research respondent. The observations below reinforce this idea.

Maria, an official involved in coordinating courses for a group of people who have not attended school in their home countries in Rinkeby had this to say:

These suburbs were no longer in tune with the tastes of what was becoming an increasingly emergent middle-class Swedish population.

Eva, a youth employment adviser with the Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm adds:

Many native Swedes no longer had the reason to continue living in these unfriendly apartment blocks. Their preference for low-rise apartments and villas suited their newfound lifestyles... that was one of the reason they abandoned suburbs like Rinkeby and Tensta.

Eriksson, a social worker with the Märsta Social District of Stockholm was more precise:

The flight of Swedes from Rinkeby and Tensta was a direct consequence of their improved socioeconomic status. A point had come when most Swedes decided it was not in their interest to continue residing in these suburbs

Eriksson continues:

Frankly, because of the particular housing ‘bundles’ available in these suburbs, their architectural design, their family-unfriendliness ... all these worked against these areas for Swedes to resettle back into them.

Many of these officials argued that once ‘tipping’ has started, it is irreversible. It was a reflection shared by Göran, an official at Rinkeby who coordinates refugee reception and their introduction into society:

It is inconceivable that Swedes would return to these areas again, not even when you empty these blocks of immigrants. For Swedes to return to these areas, you have to level them to the ground, redesign and build these whole suburbs from scratch to suit the whims and wishes of Swedes.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter concludes that housing and particular residential segregation is problematic for the integration of Somalis in Stockholm (as in other metropolitan regions). The residential segregation afflicting Somalis is partly caused by their ‘preference’ in wanting to live in close proximity with one another. For example, many Somalis had moved to Stockholm (and subsequently to segregated suburbs, e.g., Rinkeby and Tensta) from other communes they were initially settled because they wanted to live in areas where had other friends, family members or simply where other Somalis settled in relative numbers. There were a number of

reasons why Somalis wanted to live in close proximity with one another. These included the acquisition of ‘readily available information’, e.g., to secure an easier transition in Sweden; ‘fleeing’ or ‘breaking’ the isolation some experienced in the communes they were moving from; having ‘large families’ (regarded as abnormal in less segregated areas); and, religious and cultural factors.

Residential segregations afflicting Somalis are also structurally determined. This is caused by differences in socio-economic status between Somalis and ‘native’ Sweden. As this research has found, socio-economic disparities between the two exist in many spheres, e.g., language competence, education, employment, income, etc. The length of residency in Sweden also features as a reason why those Somalis, especially those wanting to extricate themselves from segregated suburbs are disadvantaged. Another structural factor relates to policy changes in housing and immigration that had unintended consequences on the residential patterns of ‘native’ Swedes and immigrants. The outcome of these policy changes led eventually to more refugees and immigrants settling into already segregated suburbs.

Whatever the precise reasons for its cause, residential segregation has adverse effects on those ‘afflicted’ (e.g., Somalis). As this research has found, the negative impact of residential segregation on the inhabitants of Rinkeby and Tensta, two adjacent segregated suburbs and home to the majority of Somalis in Stockholm were varied and numerous. They included the

lack of connectivity with the host population, unemployment, poor services and [perceived] higher crime rates (in comparison with other parts of the City).

CHAPTER SEVEN

7 INSTITUTIONAL FORM OF DISCRIMINATION

This chapter identifies institutional forms of discrimination in Swedish labour market and housing as barriers to the integration of Somalis in Sweden. *Institutional* discrimination refers to discrimination that is embedded in, as well as emanating from, the institutions or organisations of society, as opposed to the kind of discrimination that comes from individuals and small groups (e.g., right wing groups) in society. With regard to the Swedish labour market, this chapter narrows its focus on the discrimination that is embedded in the recruitment processes of employing organisations. With respect to housing, the discriminatory ways in which accommodation was allocated by housing corporations or housing agents, who played the role of gatekeepers, came out as the striking example of institutional discrimination prevalent within the housing sector.

7.1 Conceptualising Discrimination

Discrimination entails treating the ‘other’ in a less favourable light. It occurs in all societies, and has done so since time immemorial. People are often discriminated against on a number of grounds – racial, ethnic, national, cultural, religious, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, and so on. Nonetheless, whatever the motive to discriminate may be, discrimination often results in negative life-experiences for those affected.

In the literature, discrimination is rarely mentioned without reference to the notion of *prejudice*, which is often viewed as the precursor to discrimination. Prejudice is a stereotyped inner belief or attitude (i.e., a preconceived bias) held by one person against another (Carter, 1986; Marshall, 1997). To Carter (1986:205), prejudices are adopted by individuals when ‘assessing’ or evaluating another group because the group is deemed different from one’s own group. Often, the person who belongs to the group that is different is presumed to possess ‘negative’ qualities by those persons or groups that harbour the prejudice(s). According to Feagin & Eckberg (1980:20), prejudices are seen as the crucial factor that causes discrimination against the singled out-group. Indeed, as argued by a number of respondents, prejudices held against minority groups such as Somalis in Sweden, were without doubt, the underlining reasons why many discriminatory behaviours or actions occurred in societal institutions (e.g., labour market, housing, etc).

By contrast, discrimination is a behaviour that occurs when one’s attitudes, i.e., prejudice, is acted upon to produce an inequitable treatment (Carter, 1986:205). As Kinloch (1974:54) puts it, discrimination is ‘applied prejudice in which negative social definitions are translated into action’. Discrimination is thus about translating one’s deeply-held negative attitudes or prejudices against another individual into action.

Discriminatory acts may be ‘intentional’ or ‘unintentional’. The intentionality aspect of discrimination draws us to another common distinction many scholars make when describing

discrimination, viz.: direct and indirect discrimination. To Jenkins (1986), direct discrimination is born out of the intent to discriminate. It is deliberate, intentional and more overt in nature. In direct discrimination, the discriminator is motivated to discriminate. The discriminator may discriminate because s/he holds grudge against (or hostilities towards) a particular minority because of its racial, ethnic, cultural or religious affiliations. S/he may also be motivated to discriminate in order to protect his/her (own group's) social, economic and political privileges (see Feagin & Eckberg, 1980:10).

Conversely, indirect discrimination is less nebulous than direct discrimination. With indirect discrimination, the discriminator is not motivated directly by a conscious intent to harm his/her victims (Feagin & Eckberg, 1980; Jenkins, 1986). In fact, the discriminator is not aware that s/he acts or has acted in a manner that is discriminatory at all. As Jenkins (1986) confirms, the discriminator is totally unaware that his/her actions are perceived as discriminatory by the person or group it is directed at. 'Mariam's case' (see below) illustrates how indirect discrimination occurs in the recruitment process of employing organizations in Sweden.

7.2 Analysing Discrimination

Discrimination was initially discussed by respondents in conjunction with two other concepts. These were xenophobia and racism (refer to Appendix 1, for more on ‘race’ and ‘racism’). All three concepts were *a priori* concepts. They were imposed on this research with an intent to find out whether Somalis experienced all these three negative phenomena prevalent in the wider society; and if they were, how and why Somalis thought these phenomena impacted or inhibited their integration in society.

However, unlike discrimination, the concepts of xenophobia and racism did not yield adequate data to warrant appropriate analysis. There were probable reasons why Somali research respondents wanted to say more on discrimination than xenophobia and racism in society. Firstly, it was conceivable that without the reduction or elimination of discrimination in society as pertains to Somalis (or other afflicted minorities), it would probably make little sense to tackle xenophobia and racism which were not only seen as expansive but largely also more diffuse in comparison (to discrimination). For practical reasons, therefore, it made sense to focus on discrimination where legislation was relatively clear, defined, specific and more pronounced (e.g., in spheres such as education, employment, health, housing, etc) than was the case with the other two phenomena (i.e., xenophobia and racism). Certainly, in the area of institutional discrimination, many respondents thought legislation could be vigorously pursued or enforced in order to combat discrimination in society.

Likewise, the attempt to solicit support from Swedish officials with regard to xenophobia and racism also yielded little results. One probable reason could be that xenophobia and racism may have been too sensitive to warrant comfortable discussion in supposedly egalitarian Sweden. It is also probable that majority of people in Sweden (to which these officials were part) would assume, at first glance, that xenophobic and racist views, attitudes, traits or behaviours belonged not to mainstream but to the fringes of society (see Appendix 1).

Accordingly, whilst the significance of xenophobia and racism may have faded as central factors that impinge upon the integration of Somalis in Sweden, the prevalence of (perceived and personally experienced) discrimination in Sweden became the focal point for most discussions and subsequent analysis of the data pertaining to these virtues that adversely impact on the integration of Somalis.

7.3 Perceptions and Experiences of Discrimination

There was a widespread perception amongst Somali research respondents about the prevalence of discrimination that was directed against Somalis by certain institutions in society. That perception was borne not only out of the respondents' own personal experiences of discrimination but also about what happened to others in similar positions in society. Regarding, personal experiences, all Somalis respondents, for example, said they experienced discrimination from society and its institutions (e.g., organisations) in one form or another.

The knowledge of discrimination about what happens to others came from a number of sources. Somalis were either told firsthand by those afflicted or had witnessed such instances themselves, thereby, making their own assessment about the nature and degree of the discrimination directed against other people. Sometimes discrimination against others (e.g., ‘fellow’ Somalis) was based on hearsay that was often spread by word-of-mouth among Somalis. Many times, however, the knowledge about the prevalence of discrimination was informed and reinforced by experiences of family members, relatives, friends and acquaintances.

The reason why what happens to others was emphasised in the analysis relating to data on discrimination was because on a number of occasions, Somali research respondents wanted to discuss what happened to others, e.g., friends, family members, etc, rather than talking about their own experiences in relation to discrimination. ‘*There was this friend of mine*’; or ‘*this relative of mine*’; or ‘*there was this immigrant*’, etc, were the ways many respondents wanted to highlight the prevalence or encounters of discrimination in society. Whether or not these respondents wanted to deflect the incidents (of discrimination), project them on others or simply felt bad about relaying their own direct experiences was sometimes difficult to tell. Hanan, a 42 year old male respondent, for example, typifies how some Somali wanted to explain the existence of discrimination in society:

Take the example of two of my former college friends, one Somali and the other a Swede, both of whom I personally showed a job advertisement I clipped from a local newspaper. What I know is

that my Somali friend had more job experience and was relatively better educated than my Swedish friend. Unsurprisingly, my Swedish friend was offered the job whilst my Somali friend continues to languish in unemployment.

Another major source of knowledge about the prevalence of institutional discrimination against immigrants (Somalis included) comes from the Swedish media which regularly highlights ethnic discrimination in society. Indeed, many Somali respondents commonly referred to media reporting on incidents of discriminatory acts or behaviour directed against immigrants as a vindication of the existence of institutional discrimination against them (Somalis) and immigrants in general. Two common investigative TV programmes that received accolades from some Somali respondents were *Kalla Fakta* and *Uppdrag Gransking* on TV4 (Swedish Channel 4) and SVT1 (Swedish Television One) respectively. Undoubtedly, for many years now, discrimination in society has been the subject on these TV programmes. Their investigative journalists have uncovered the prevalence and the scale of this phenomenon in society. Through numerous sting operations, for example, journalists were able to unearth many of the discriminatory practices immigrants were likely to face in society, particularly, with regards to labour market relations and the housing sector.

The most common approach used by investigative journalists was to let immigrants reply to an advertised vacancy or vacancies and record the response from the firm. These TV programmes have demonstrated on many occasions, that there was a higher probability that the response from employers to immigrants would be a negative one. ‘Regrettably, we have just filled the

advertised position [vacancy]’, says one Somali research respondent, ‘would be the most common answer that await immigrant applicants’. Then journalist(s), often ‘native’ Swedes(s) posing as applicant(s), with the same or sometimes as less qualified and less experienced than the immigrant who has just been told the vacancy had been filled would contact the same firm – sometimes speaking to the same person who spoke to the immigrant applicant. Again these investigative programmes have exposed on many occasions that there was a more probable positive response to ‘native’ Swedes (here the journalist) from employers than would be the case for their immigrant counterparts.

The other area where investigative journalists have commonly looked into was similar discriminatory practices in the housing sector. Even here, investigative journalists have from time to time undertaken similar sting operations where journalists let immigrant meet agents for rental apartments, especially in non-immigrant density neighbourhoods. Again, it would be more likely for native Swedes to obtain preferential treatment in those apartments – even where immigrants and ‘natives’ may have been in the same income-brackets.

7.4 Institutional Discrimination

Institutional discrimination is associated with the kind of discrimination that is institutionally imbedded, i.e., the kind of discrimination one finds in organisations that are supposed to serve all persons who are legally settled in Sweden irrespective of background (Cater, 1986; Feagin & Eckberg, 1980; Jenkins, 1986). According to Cater (1986:205), institutional discrimination arises when laws or policies directly discriminate against certain individuals or groups; or indirectly, when prejudice becomes the ‘convention of institutionalised behaviour and occurs under the guise of legitimacy’.

Although Somali respondents noted they faced negative discriminatory treatments in a number of Swedish institutions, they reserved the greatest emphasis for those they encounter in the Swedish labour market and housing sector.

7.5 Institutional Discrimination in Swedish Labour Market

Within the context of Swedish labour market relation, there were two scenarios under which Somalis felt they were subjected to institutionalised discrimination. The first of these patterns was reported at workplaces by Somalis. The second one, which constituted the bulk of the report, and to which we have already alluded to, is the one inherent in employment screening procedures of employing organisations. It is here where potential [Somali] employees felt they

were systematically ‘sidelined’ in preference for other candidates, notably, ‘native’ Swedes or others deemed to have less ‘objectionable’ characteristics in the eyes of recruiters.

It was no coincidence that Somali research respondents attached greater emphasis and weight on discrimination inherent in employment screening procedures (i.e., recruitment process), and comparatively less on those (discrimination) that occurs at the workplace. The reason was because a sizeable number of them have yet to gain a firmer foothold in Swedish labour market – many of who were either unemployed or had insecure workplace rights – a scenario that seems reflective of the wide Somali population in Sweden (see Chapter Five). It was also probable to assume that the few employed Somalis considered themselves, or were considered by fellow Somalis (especially the unemployed) as being ‘relatively lucky’, under prevailing circumstances. Amin, a 36 year old male respondent, shares his reflection and asks:

Why grumble about discrimination at workplace
when so many of our compatriots languish in
open-ended long-term unemployment?

7.5.1 Discrimination at workplace

Despite the negligible attention paid by respondents with regard to discrimination in the workplace, there were, nonetheless, a few of them who reported such instances and felt strongly about the kind of negative treatment they had to endure as a result of this. One such person was Hanan, a 42 year old male respondent, who claimed discrimination against immigrants in the firm he worked for could both be ‘seen and sensed’. He also talked about

how he felt isolated and marginalised because of being unfairly discriminated against. Another respondent, Awer, a 42 year old male respondents, also noted 'tendencies that were not normal' what he called, 'little things here and there' that he felt were of discriminatory in nature. When prompted for how he was discriminated against, Awer, the only 'black' employee in his company, said he felt as though his co-workers sometimes doubted his competence. Awer was further bemused by the fact that very few of his colleagues came to him for advice or consultation on work related matters. To Awer, his co-workers would rather confide in other colleagues than him. Awer explains:

There are many times when I felt the attitudes of my fellow workers brought my very competence into disrepute. I know of some colleagues who would not ask me questions which they would readily ask my Swedish colleague sitting beside me. I do not know why... I can only speculate. May be they think talking to me would lower their dignity or self-esteem.

Another of those who described discrimination at the workplace was Hassan, a 37 year old male respondent. Whilst acknowledging the prevalence of discrimination in the workplace, and, indeed, saying he was involved in incidents at workplaces that could be interpreted as discriminatory, Hassan was keen not to attribute that as being representative of what he called the 'traditional Swedish workplace', but rather to the attitudes of some work colleagues who were 'relatively not that educated', 'have not travelled extensively', and thus, 'unfamiliar with other cultures'. To him many of the 'unsubstantiated claims with xenophobia and racial

undertones' he heard in his former workplace years ago, could be pinned down to the 'few "narrowly-viewed" and relatively uneducated work colleagues' he worked alongside.

Arguing from a slightly different angle, Mariam, a 30 year old female respondent cites that lack of career advancement or expectation (on her part) in her workplace as symptomatic of discrimination in the organisation she works for. According to Mariam:

It would be difficult for us who were employed to advance our careers in the current atmosphere. Frankly, I believe if I stayed in my present workplace, I would be stuck in my present position for ever.

7.5.2 Discrimination inherent in the recruitment process

The feelings among many Somalis was that they were being excluded from greater participation in Swedish labour market precisely because of the discriminatory practices embedded in the routine operations of many employing organisations. Indeed, for Somalis, nowhere was discrimination more pertinent than in the recruitment process of employing organisations in Sweden. It was here they claimed they were unfairly and blatantly discriminated against since it denied them 'the due consideration they deserved', to use the phrase of one Somali respondent.

The respondents appeared resigned to the continuation of discrimination given the regularity with which they experienced such action during the recruitment process. This is captured in the following sentiments.

Abshir (a 40 year old male respondent) says:

As Somalis we are destined to the bottom list in the selection [recruitment] process by employers.

Diriye (a 39 year male respondent) adds:

Available vacancies obviously go to the natives first. The next in line for consideration are other Scandinavians and people of Western origin. It when all others who are preferred as workers are exhausted that they turn to us as a last resort.

Fanan (a 45 year old male respondent) claims:

One reason why so many of us are unemployed is not because jobs are unavailable but because we are not preferred.

7.5.2.1 Partiality in Recruitment

Before we explore this issue, it is useful to briefly explain what Somali respondents meant by the ‘recruitment process’. They were referring to a process that conventionally begins when people apply for jobs that were advertised or came to their knowledge through a tip off or by

other means. Customarily, the next step in this process entails the sending of applications to the employing organisation. The 'normal' response from the potential employer's side (or the employing organisation) was to let the applicant know that they received his/her application through a letter of acknowledgement. In a letter of acknowledgement the employing company often states that the application would be looked at and the applicant would be communicated with in due course.

In the meantime the recruiting company compiles shortlists of candidates they wish to invite for interview. Many companies often write to applicants to inform them of whether or not they were of interest to their firms. Those who are not short-listed for interviews, receive what might be termed a 'with regret' letter that justifies, often in brief terms, why the company thinks they were not the suitable candidates for the job (or short-list for interview), and again going by convention, wish those unsuccessful candidates luck with their future job searches.

Interviews are arranged, and subsequently conducted, for those whom the company deems to be of interest. These candidates then receive feedbacks about the interviews. Sometimes people are selected for employment at this stage, other times they may need to proceed further for the next rounds of interviews. Ultimately, for the successful candidate his/her referees are contacted. Provided those references are positive, then the selected candidate is invited to take up the job.

A number of Somali research respondents argue that there was little neutrality or impartiality in the recruitment process of most employing organisations that they have had contact with. They argued the outcomes of the jobs they apply for are often decided before hand, meaning they did not undergo the due processes that an impartial recruitment process would otherwise have entailed. Indeed, to the vast majority of Somali respondents, the view was that they were hardly even allowed the chance to compete favourably with other applicants (e.g., those from the host society).

One of the commonest claims by Somalis of discrimination was where job applications they sent to employer were ‘automatically destined for the waste-paper-basket’, in the words of one respondent. These Somalis also referred to the ‘volumes’ of applications they send to employers and the lack of response from employers. Somali respondents also maintained that they hardly ever progressed beyond the initial stages of the recruitment process let alone to making the short-list of candidates to be interviewed for jobs. Somalis saw this as a clear example of institutional discrimination they meet at the selection or recruitment process of most employing organisations in Sweden.

7.5.2.1.1 Applications Destined for the Waste-Paper-Basket

To reiterate, many Somalis felt they were hardly given the chance to prove themselves in the first place by r ecruiters. They argued employing organisations ‘frequently’ and

‘systematically’ ignore their job applications. The sheer ‘volumes’ of applications Somalis send to employers and the apparent lack of acknowledgement from employers has convinced many Somalis that Swedish employers discriminate against them in a more systematic manner.

An extreme illustration of the practice involved Abshir, a 40 year old male respondent, who said he sent four hundred applications in a three month period, few of which led to job interviews. What was troubling with Abshir’s case was that he was relatively well integrated into mainstream Swedish society. He holds a Masters degree in economics from a Swedish university and cohabits with a native Swedish woman. He hardly mixes with other Somalis since he lives in a suburb that has few Somalis. One would expect Abshir to be more favourably predisposed than most Somalis in Sweden – having two advantages over most Somalis –, i.e., that of higher education and that of being socially and cultural well connected to members of the native community. Yet all these were in Abshir’s own words to no avail. Says Abshir:

I have sent literally hundreds of applications but all in vain. And, let us face it; I have been pretty realistic about the stark realities of not securing a job commensurate with my academic qualification in Sweden. It is not a question of choosing. What is mind boggling, however, is when I apply for jobs where I considered myself overqualified and yet I was denied.

Abshir's 'realistic' assessment regarding the general trend for immigrant with academic qualifications is supported in the literature as being something obvious. It typifies an example of how immigrants with academic qualifications, who, even after they have acquired education or skills in Sweden still continue to face severe handicaps in the Swedish labour market (Rydgren, 2004).

7.5.2.1.2 *'Bearing' a Foreign Names*

One other recurrent issue in connection to the 'frequent' and 'systematic' discrimination inherent in the recruitment process of most recruiting organisations with respect to Somali candidates was their 'names'. Indeed, a number of Somali research respondents seemed convinced that employing organisation hardly looked at their applications once employers recognise that the 'name-bearers' were, from their (employers') viewpoint unsuitable for their organisations. That made them not to make progress in the recruitment process. This is reflected in the sentiments of the following Somali participants:

Hirab, a 55 year old male respondent, affirms:

Strange-sounding names makes it easier for recruiters to easily prejudge and easily sideline them for those other candidates deemed more suitable for the company in question.

Ahmed, a 42 year old male respondent, makes a follow up points:

Bearing certain foreign names in Sweden is an obvious handicap. I'm not referring to Smith, James, Timothy, Jacqueline or Mary. Rather I'm talking about Mohamed, Hassan, Fatuma, Suleqa, and the like... the sort of names that disqualify an individual from eventual recruitment or subsequent career paths.

To remedy this, the solution would have been to change names to more Swedish/Western-sounding names. However, none of the Somali respondents had contemplated changing his/her name to 'less strange ones' from the perspective of Swedish employers. Indeed, there were numerous recounting by these respondents of friends from other ethnic groups who have changed their names to sound Swedish or European with the intent to improve their chances in the Swedish labour market. Asked why they did not contemplate change their names, many Somalis talked about how strongly they felt against doing that – as that was tantamount to changing their own identity (as both Somali and Muslim) which they were not prepared to do.

Undoubtedly, the reasons why some immigrants resorted to changing their name to Swedish- or European sounding ones was to secure advancement in the recruitment process. Reaching the interview stage mattered greatly for immigrants who felt discriminated against because of their ethnic origins. Coming to the interview stage was immensely important in that it enables the immigrant to proof what s/he was 'worth'. One could impress upon employers that s/he spoke fluent Swedish, was culturally assimilated, display qualities that went beyond 'mere' names, etc. Also, the very act of changing names itself could be conceived by employers that

the immigrant had a desire to integrate into society which could work in favour of job applicants.

7.5.2.1.3 'Hitches' at the Interview Stages

The general impression was that few Somalis made it to the interview stages of the recruitment process of many employing organisation. As we have noted, getting to the interview stage is in itself significant progress, a positive sign an individual's job hunting endeavours is about to bear fruit. Nonetheless, even at interview a number of Somalis reported the negative experiences they encountered in which they felt they were unfairly and impartially treated.

Examples cited to illustrate this claim included where employers sounded 'encouraging and interested' to applicants over the phone at first but where the attitude changed at the interview session itself. Hanan, a 42 male respondent recounts:

No sooner had I arrived at the interview venue,
than I noted an abrupt change in the facial
features of the employer.

As others attested, matters were not limited to the body language of the interviewer. The 'aggressiveness of the questioner or the way questions were framed or put', 'the whole tone of

the conversations’, ‘the way interviewers focus more on the weakness rather than strengths of candidates’, and so on and so forth, were relayed as testimonial to the kind of discrimination Somalis felt they were subjected to during job interviews.

7.5.2.1.4 Mariam: The Case of Mistaken Identity

In our attempt to establish a conceptual understanding of discrimination, we noted how indirect discrimination occurred, i.e., how discriminators were often unmotivated, directly, by a conscious intent to harm his/her victims; how unaware the discriminator may have acted in a manner that was discriminatory; and how unaware they were of whether their actions could be conceived of as discriminatory to their victims (see Feagin & Eckberg, 1980; Jenkins, 1986). ‘Mariam’s case’, here, clearly illustrates that the discrimination Somalis suffered was not only direct (as remunerated by the numerous examples presented above) but may sometimes also be indirect and less nebulous. Mariam is a 30 year old female respondent.

The incident Mariam was involved in happened just before she was about to be ushered in for a job interview by an employer/recruiter. As it turned out, the recruiter mistook Mariam for a ‘native’ Swede before the two physically met or finally sat down for the interview.

Mariam, like all the names used in this research was a fictitious one. Mariam’s real name, however, was one of those few Somali female names that were shared with Swedes and other Westerners. Moreover, Mariam spoke faultless

Swedish with the right ‘accent’ to match. She was perhaps the only Somali woman respondent in this research who had made all attempts to advance herself in terms of her proficiency in Swedish, employment and was about to take up her studies at university in a few months’ time.

Mariam remembers how weeks earlier she saw a job advert in a local newspaper and decided to apply for it. She did so by submitting a written application. She also made the attempt to call the employer to follow up her application a few days later. Following that telephone call, Mariam felt reassured she was the kind of candidate the employer was looking for given that she ‘had the right experience for the job’.

Then came the fateful day, the day of interview – a day she recalls how she dressed immaculately and wore the makeup that matched her impressive ‘business-like’ attire. Mariam said she made sure that she was at the employer’s office a half hour before the interview could start, adding, she was well aware of the fate that awaited her should she come late for the interview – as that would reflect badly on her and eventually compromise her chances of securing the job she was interested in at the time.

Mariam said her first ‘shock’ came with the way the employer ‘behaved’ in the reception where she and others sat. It is here where the ‘mistaken identity’ comes in. The employer called Mariam’s ‘real’ name (the name she shared with Swedes). Responding to the call by the employer, Mariam stood up to meet this manager with the ‘natural’ cordiality and facial expression hopeful job interviewees wear to impress upon their eventual employer. But alas! All along the employer was looking at the ‘other direction’ for this ‘other

person' which Mariam purportedly was not. As Mariam recalls the employer looked left, right and straight into the eyes of others who sat at the reception but paid little attention to her presence.

Eventually, it dawned on the employer that the person whose name she called was none other than Mariam's. Mariam also talked of how clearly the employer was taken aback by this realisation, the realisation that Mariam was not the Mariam she was after. 'How good Swedish you speak! I thought actually you were a Swede', was what the employer had to say to 'break the ice', according to Mariam.

Mariam said the encounter with the employer was heart-breaking for her. To Mariam, this incident was a clear example of the kind of prejudices and discrimination Somalis and many other immigrants must contend with on frequent basis in today's Sweden. She knew her chances of securing that job was very minimal and, indeed, as it turned out, she did not secure it.

7.5.3 Is it really Only about Discrimination?

Swedish officials acknowledged the existence of institutional discrimination as a barrier to labour integration in Sweden. Nonetheless, they laid emphasis on the ‘suitability’ of Somali candidates for many of the jobs on the labour market to which many Somalis were said to ‘have many shortcomings’, to use the phrase of one Swedish official. By suitability, Swedish officials were referring to relevant qualifications and skills (or credentials) and previous work experience. In addition, there were two other factors that figured in the deliberation with Swedish officials in this regard. These were ‘*gaps*’ in the *employment histories*’ of Somali applicants, as well as, the ‘fear of the unknown’ factor. To Swedish officials, the combination of these four factors (i.e., relevant qualifications, work experiences, gaps in ‘life histories’ and ‘fear of the unknown’) influenced decision of whether to hire Somali workers.

7.5.3.1 The Relevance of Qualification

Qualifications play a decisive role and are, certainly, an important factor for making decisions when recruiting workers. Accordingly, to a number of Swedish officials, one reason why Somalis ‘fared badly’ in the recruitment process of employing organisations was because they [Somalis] lacked the necessary relevant qualifications for the jobs they apply for.

When Swedish officials talked of relevant qualifications, they meant those obtained in Sweden. To them relevant qualifications coupled, of course, with good command of the Swedish language were the ideal traits employers in Sweden looked for in applicants. These officials, were convinced, once Somalis were competent (i.e., qualified) and had a reasonable command of the Swedish language, they would acquire employment, like all others, irrespective of background. Indeed, many Swedish officials claimed they did not envisage ‘much’ discrimination, if the qualifications Somalis possessed matched the jobs they applied for. However, if Somalis failed to fulfill the job requirement in question because they are evaluated against competent Swedish workers, then that in their eyes, could not be viewed as discriminatory but ‘fair play’ in accordance with the law. Björn, an employment advisor with the Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm, narrates from own professional experience:

When I worked as an employment exchange officer years ago, I had this client from Somalia who despaired and was on the verge of giving up his job searching work. He claimed he had applied for countless jobs but to no avail. Time and again he would claim discrimination as the reason why he was not able to secure employment.

I reassured him, that his predicament had nothing to do with discrimination. Rather, he was searching for jobs in a branch that was already saturated and where he had little work experience. I advised him to change to another branch where his chances of acquiring jobs were higher. Thankfully, he took my advice and after six month of training, this client landed a job.

To Björn, and other officials, what pays off for most people irrespective of background were the acquisition of qualifications, persistence, hard work, a positive attitude and energetic, serious job searches.

7.5.3.2 Relevant Work Experience

The lack of relevant work experience was among the reasons given by Swedish officials as an important factor that influences the labour market participation of Somalis adversely. Like relevant qualifications, relevant work experience was equated with that which had been acquired in Sweden. To emphasis their point, officials frequently juxtaposed relevant work experience (which mattered immensely to Swedish employers) with the futility of Somalis using their previous work experiences (accrued from their home country). According to Eriksson, a social worker with the Märsta Social District of Stockholm:

It would seem no one wants to hear what they have done prior to their arrival in Sweden in terms of work or other life experiences. No one, for that matter glances or wants to glance at their previous baggage. That is history, something of the past. What matters is *here and now*.

Indeed, the reason why many Somalis (or immigrants) remain under-employed in Sweden was seen as testament to the little esteem Swedish employers hold for work experience (and qualifications) obtained from abroad. One recurrent example of underemployment involve highly educated immigrants who have difficulties in finding work in the areas of their

expertise prior to their arrival in Sweden. Eva, a youth employment adviser with the Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm testifies:

We have highly educated taxi-, bus- and train drivers in Stockholm who have taken up these professions because they have given up finding work in the professions they trained for in their homelands.

Two reasons were given by Swedish officials why Somalis were disadvantaged when it came to acquiring relevant work experience – or ‘any’ work experience for that matter. Firstly, many Somalis have remained unemployed, and continue to do so for a quite a considerable amount of time, and hence, have little or no opportunity to gain work experience. Secondly, many Somalis have been engaged in learning Swedish language and acquiring education for many years, inhibiting their opportunities to gain work experience. In part, engaging in learning language and pursuing education was necessary for people to establish themselves in Sweden, as education and language were indispensable tools to be equipped with for any immigrant in a new country.

Some Swedish officials were, nonetheless, sympathetic to the predicament of Somalis who had stuck to their work experience from their home and who were not able, for whatever reason, to accrue one in Sweden. These officials noted, when people’s past work- and life experiences were not taken on board, they (people) were bound to be frustrated since that amounted to the ‘erasure’ of a significant part of people’s life trajectories.

Göran, an official at Rinkeby who coordinates refugee reception and their introduction into society had this to say:

Imagine going through university, acquiring a degree, getting work, putting a career behind you, all of which are achievements you and your family would have felt proud of. Imagine if no one appreciated those accomplishments? That is the prospect our immigrants, including Somalis, have to face up to in Sweden.

Moreover, others were also sympathetic in the sense that Somalis had to endure considerable amount of time learning Swedish and acquiring education after they have arrived in Sweden, yet had to be treated as though they were making their debut into the labour market.

Nonetheless, there were other officials who were not as 'sympathetic' as their counterparts. One of them was Eriksson, a social worker with the Märsta Social District of Stockholm, who argued that the lack of experience was something many 'native' Swedes have to wrestle with, not least those who have recently completed their education, and who equally, find it difficult to obtain jobs because they lack relevant or no work experience. 'Conventionally', argues Eriksson, 'most employers would be hesitant to hire people with little or no experience irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds'.

Admittedly though, 'native' Swedes making their 'debut' into Swedish labour market would have added advantages over Somalis or other immigrants in similar circumstances. Firstly,

Swedish youth, would most certainly have acquired some form of education or qualification, and would have no problem with language issues. Secondly, they would have little issues with acquiring reliable references as opposed to Somalis with no foothold in the labour market (and sometimes in the wider society).

7.5.3.3 'Gaps' in the 'Employment Histories' of Somali Applicants

Another additional hurdle for Somalis, to which Swedish officials referred to were the many 'gaps in the life histories' of Somali candidates. These 'gaps' were said to work against Somalis in their bid to acquire a foothold in the labour market. There were a number of important factors that contributed to these 'gaps'. One of the first reasons was connected to their plight as people fleeing wars, persecution and other forms of hardships. Migration itself involves formulating and planning an escape route. It seldom goes smoothly by moving from one destination to another. It often involved, as it did for many Somalis, staying in or adopting other points in the transit route as halfway houses before eventually making it to Sweden.

Secondly, a number of Somalis had to spent some considerable amount of time in refugee reception centres in Sweden where they were said to 'idle', thereby, remaining unemployed for a long time before they were given permission to stay in Sweden. Note, until recently, refugees were not eligible to work before they were given 'official' residence in the country.

Thirdly, as mentioned earlier, once Somalis acquired permission to stay in the country and were subsequently placed in communes, they had to embark on learning Swedish language and acquire some form of formal education. Nonetheless, learning Swedish and acquiring education takes time, all adding up to the ‘gaps’ in the employment histories of Somali applicants.

Fourthly and most importantly, once Somalis had learnt Swedish and acquired some form of education in Sweden, that in itself rarely translated into better opportunities in the labour market (see Chapter Five). Accordingly, it was not uncommon to find Somalis who have been out of work for many years, often, continuously. Others may have had an ‘on and off’ relationship with the labour market by working part-time or on a temporary basis with long spells of unemployment in between. Also noted was the case of many Somalis who have not secured a single employment since coming to the country a decade or so ago.

Noticeably, these ‘gaps’ were cumulative in nature. This meant the totality of their impact hugely worked against Somalis when it comes to competing with other workers in the labour market who have not had the same or similar experiences as Somalis in Sweden.

7.5.3.4 *'Fear of the Unknown'*

From the perspective of Swedish officials, another reason why Somalis had problems in securing employment was because Swedish employers, at present, have little knowledge about Somalis as a group, in general, and as workers, in particular. Accordingly, it was argued, that this apparent lack of knowledge about Somalis only contributes to the hesitancy of recruiters in employing Somalis. Contrastingly, Swedish officials portrayed 'Swedish' workers as people 'known' to employers – people who were 'reliable' and 'predictable'. As Mona, a social worker with the Rinkeby District of Stockholm blatantly put it:

Would you go for the person you are confident about, and, know at least something about, or, a person you know little about? One can understand why employers become hesitant since they know little about Somalis.

It was argued, the reason why 'mutual fear' persisted between Somalis and Swedes, as well as the dearth of knowledge about Somalis by Swedes was the lack of 'natural meeting places' or forums. The insinuation was that people meet at work places, institutions of learning, recreational centres, etc. They also met through family or friends, through leisure and professional clubs, etc. However, when it came to the interaction between Somalis and 'native' Swedes, none of these practices were common. The assessment by these officials was that as long as there were no 'natural' meeting places between the two communities, Somalis would experience prejudices and discrimination (e.g., in the labour market) a little longer.

Nonetheless, whilst some officials were hopeful that this ‘fear’ would recede with time, others were not. Those who were optimistic argued that, for employers to allay their fear about Somalis, they [employers] had to acquire a reasonable level of confidence in them. To them fear was a human trait, and ‘employers were human’, to use the wording of one official. Accordingly, when employers overcome their fear of people like Somalis, their attitudes towards them would change for the better.

Those less optimistic like Eriksson, a social worker with the Märsta Social District, maintained that ‘fear’ cannot recede as long as there are ‘no qualitative contacts’ between native Swedes and Somalis. Eriksson upheld that the two communities had to familiarise themselves with each other for such ‘fear’ to disappear. For Eriksson, however, the onus was more on Somalis than the host society:

It is up to individual Somalis to help in that endeavour since society cannot impose its will on them.

Maria, an official who coordinates literacy courses for immigrant adults in Rinkeby, was more assertive in her claim that Somalis (as other immigrants in similar positions) were to ‘blame’ because they often held themselves back in ‘their own cocoon’. To Maria, Somalis hardly made any efforts to make friends and contacts with Swedish natives. Sounding benevolent but paternalistic, she recommends:

Start making friends with native Swedes. Start drinking coffee with normal Svensson [the average Swede]. Svensson will soon discover that you too are normal people. I think a lot boils down to being strangers to each other.

Officials were also keen to point out that ‘fear of the unknown’ was not something uniquely Swedish. They argued, ‘fear’ was a two-way phenomenon where immigrants, including Somalis, had their share of ‘fear towards Swedes’. Indeed, there were many examples of Swedish officials trying to highlight the negative attitudes immigrants harbour towards ‘native’ Swedes or the Swedish society in general. These examples included, the fear towards the *Swedish System* which in the eyes of groups like Somalis had the potentiality to ‘destroy’ their families, culture and religion; or their perception [Somalis’] about Swedish sexuality, i.e., of Swedes taking a more relaxed attitude towards sex and sexuality; of equality between Swedish men and women which threatens patriarchal patterns inherent in cultures like that of Somalis, etc. These fears, according to these officials, make Somalis to ‘retreat to their own comfort zones’ – to use the words of one official. To these officials, Somalis must also overcome their own fears.

7.6 Institutional Discrimination in Housing

This section deals with the prevalence of discrimination in the rental housing sector. The phenomenon of discrimination was raised as an important factor that explained why residential segregation between Somalis and Swedes existed (refer to Chapter Six, for more details). Rental housing is emphasised here because the overwhelming majority of Somalis (including all the twenty eight Somali respondents interviewed) lived in rented apartment owned by municipal corporations.

7.6.1 Queuing System

Rental housing is often allocated through a queuing (waiting-list) system (*bostadkö*). It is operated by a handful of housing authorities (*bodstadsförmedlingar*) in Stockholm. The most prominent of these housing authorities are *Stockholm Stads Bostadsförmedling* and *Bostad Direkt*. These authorities liaise closely with municipal housing corporations (e.g., Familje Bostäder, Svenska Bostäder, and HSB) so that the latter can let all their housing stock. Housing authorities are the enablers of partnerships through which contracts between housing applicants and municipally owned corporations occur.

According to a number of research respondents, most of the discrimination with regard to the allocation of housing occurred within the queuing system. It was in the queuing system housing agents played the role of gatekeepers. These agents determined, for example, who

were allocated apartment(s); and, where those apartments were located whether in segregated or less segregated suburbs. In doing so, housing agents not only discriminated against immigrants housing applicants, but also discriminated in favour of native applicants (cf. Ahmed, 2007). Indeed, it was through this queuing system that housing agents were able to steer immigrants like Somalis into segregated areas and in so doing away from the more reputable suburbs (i.e., less segregated one). By the same token through positive discrimination and favouritism, native Swedes were steered away from the less reputable segregated suburbs into more reputable less segregated suburbs.

7.6.1.1 Supposedly fair

The queuing system is supposedly fair: Applicants are allocated accommodation on a first-come-first-serve basis, provided that they fulfill the eligibility criteria – spelt out by the housing authorities. These include: Is the applicant employed? Does the applicant have a viable and or sustainable income? In the absence of work or viable income, has the applicant a guarantor whose income and employment meets the eligibility criteria on behalf of the applicant?

Nonetheless, these eligibility criteria serve often as mere guidelines giving housing agents the power to use their discretion to consider a host of other issues that may favour or disfavour the potential applicant. These include: What connection has an applicant to the suburb in which

s/he wants to rent an apartment? Does the applicant have a family in that suburb? This is most appropriate for young applicants who have recently come of age, and who want to move from (their parents') home but wish to maintain a closer proximity to their family.

Dispensations are also made for vulnerable groups in society (e.g., those with health problems, disability, alcohol and substance abuse, etc). In some cases, even homeless families with small children may fall under this category of vulnerability. All these groups are usually supported by the Municipal Social Service Departments. Indeed, until recently the Municipal Social Service Departments had a greater say in the allocation of a small number of apartments they rented on behalf of their clients. The aim was to reintroduce these clients back into society so that they could lead normal lives. Housing companies also reserved some of their apartments for Social Services for the purposes stated above. This has since dwindled because of: (a) shortages in accommodation; and, (b) public housing companies are now more profit-making oriented rather than 'socially concerned' providers.

7.6.1.2 Unfairness

Despite the formal criteria and dispensations, it was argued that the queuing/waiting list system was an arena where both overt and covert discrimination seemed to occur when allocating accommodation to applicants (see Molina, 1997). For a number of respondents, it

was an inescapable reality that the queuing system was manipulated by agents, and in doing so, had an impact on residential segregation.

7.6.1.3 'Fluid' Eligibility Criteria

Also reported by a number of respondents, was the way in which these housing agents tended to manipulate the queuing system for housing by 'making' the formal eligibility rules either 'lax' or 'stringent' depending on 'who' the applicants were and 'where' they wanted to settle. For example, the eligibility criteria for accommodation was more likely to be stringent if Somalis applied for apartments in Swedish dominated areas and less stringent or 'lax' if they applied for apartments in immigrant dominated areas. This was one reason why some Somali research respondents thought Somali tenants got more offers or 'openings' in segregated suburbs when their turn in the queuing system came. Indeed, as a number of Somali research respondents reported, they settled in Rinkeby and Tensta precisely because, that was where they got referred to for accommodation when they applied for housing the first time they came to Stockholm.

7.6.1.4 Withhold Vital Information

One of the tendencies that housing agents employed to discriminate was to withhold information on residential vacancies in less segregated suburbs from immigrant applicants, even when these applicants made clear their preferences for those areas. Instead, immigrant applicants were regularly fed with information on residential vacancies that arose in segregated areas. Indeed, this is a fact that resonates with Hårsman & Quigley (1995) who confirm that housing agents contribute to residential segregation by denying immigrants the whole range of options that would otherwise have been available to them.

Naturally, for people who were in immediate need of accommodation, waiting for their areas of residential preference became difficult, especially, when they perceive that no positive outcome would be forthcoming, not least because of discrimination.

This was a perception shared by Isir, a 32 year old female research respondent:

If a person is desperate for accommodation, then choice takes a secondary consideration. S/he grabs what comes along even when s/he is aware that taking that decision may entail other problems.

7.6.2 Attributes to Discrimination in Housing

Research respondents speculated on what agents took onboard, consciously or unconsciously, when making decisions regarding housing applications. These included: ‘Swedish avoidance’, the ‘socioeconomic realities’ of immigrants; ‘the relative high turn-over’; ‘commercial considerations’; ‘a willing clientele’; and, ‘a willing system to assist’.

7.6.2.1 Swedish Avoidance

Housing agents were well aware that Swedes wanted to ‘avoid’ living in immigrant dominated suburbs (cf. Bråmås, *et al.*, 2006). Given this ‘avoidance’, housing agents nearly always tended to allocate apartments to ‘native’ applicants by meeting their preferred suburb of choice as far as possible. Indeed, as it was noted earlier, Swedes were ‘tipped’ from immigrant dominated suburbs in the past (see Chapter Six). The futility of referring or encouraging Swedes to settle into segregated areas even when there were residential vacancies available was predictable. This was captured in the sentiments of the Abdirizak, a 33 year old male respondent:

Swedes would not return to these unfriendly housing blocks. It is just too uninviting for them.

In line with the above, some respondents went even further to prescribe how Swedes would return to segregated suburbs like Rinkeby and Tensta. As claimed by some of them, Swedes would return to these suburbs only when they are demolished; the suburbs are built from

scratch; their entire infrastructure and services provisions are revamped; and, Swedes become the majority, etc. That being unlikely, the continued avoidance of Swedes was inevitable.

7.6.2.2 Socio-economic Realities

The argument about ‘socioeconomic realities’ related to the ‘knowledge’ housing agents had on immigrants like Somalis, impacted on their decision-making processes vis-à-vis housing applications. The knowledge was two-fold. One was prejudicial and was often based on the preconceived negative attitudes toward immigrants like Somalis. The other was more concrete, based on the personal details of prospective applicants.

Prejudicial knowledge

In the world of housing agents, immigrants like Somalis are regarded as outsiders. Among the prejudices, agents held was that Somalis, in general, lack socio-economic-, linguistic- and cultural integration into society; that Somalis were by and large, unemployed and were likely to be on public support, and so on and so forth. All these, consciously or unconsciously, worked against Somali applicants.

Contrastingly, housing agents had higher expectations from ‘native’ applicants. The assumption was that, the ‘native’ applicant was, naturally, competent linguistically, socially and culturally; that s/he was likely to be employed (or in the process of acquiring employment); that s/he was likely to have viable income (or in the process of acquiring income) etc. All these consciously or unconsciously worked in favour of the ‘native’ applicants.

Concrete knowledge

Housing agents often had access to applicants’ personal details such as employment status, their incomes, etc, as part of their basis for making decision on housing applications (i.e., eligibility criteria). Through this information, housing agents would become aware of the ‘economic realities’ of immigrants like Somalis (e.g., as unemployed, with little or no income, etc) and take that ‘reality’ into account. Given that many Somalis are economically disadvantaged, it would probably be unlikely for agents to allocate them apartments located in the more affluent, less segregated suburbs.

7.6.2.3 The relatively High turn-over of Tenancies

Another reason why immigrants like Somalis were regularly referred to segregated areas was because of the relatively high turn-over of tenants. High residential turn-over contributed to segregation, in the sense, that housing agents were, for example, able to steer immigrants away from Swedish areas. Without such relatively high residential turn-over, agents would probably ‘work a little harder’ to refer immigrants to less segregated areas, to use the paraphrase of one respondent.

7.6.2.4 Commercial Considerations

Some research participants speculated that ‘commercial considerations’ had a hand in ‘steering’ immigrants like Somalis into already segregated areas. First, residential vacancies in segregated areas have to be ‘filled’. Those available to do so could only be found among immigrant communities. It could, therefore, be argued that this was a market that primarily targeted immigrants in which housing agents acted from a seller’s perspective, hence, contributing to the maintenance and perpetuation of residential segregation between immigrants and ‘native’ Swedes.

What is the consequence of not renting apartments? This would have obvious negative financial consequences for the housing companies concerned. It was a commonly held

impression among a number of respondents that housing companies would rather have buildings razed to the ground than have them vacant for a considerable length of time, since maintaining them unoccupied would probably be more expensive. Note, even where municipal housing companies have social housing (as this differentiates them from purely market oriented companies), and all that this may entail; their aim was still to stay afloat, and, also to have comfortable ‘profit’ margins.

7.6.2.5 A Willing Clientele and a Willing System

It was perceived that agents normally assumed that immigrants like Somalis (‘even those who were least willing’), were prepared to settle in immigrant dominated suburbs if they have no other alternative unlike Swedes whose ‘avoidance’ and ‘belligerence’ against these (segregated areas) is definite. Moreover, agents assumed immigrants like Somalis had good ‘reason’ to settle in suburbs like Rinkeby and Tensta given that there were likely to have their social networks in these suburbs than in areas where Swedes predominate.

Moreover, it was assumed housing agents counted on a ‘liberal’ welfare system that assist immigrants like Somalis – many of whom are more likely to be unemployed, and dependent on social assistance – with their rental expenses, hence, the laxity over eligibility criteria for housing allocation.

7.7 Conclusion

Discrimination is a major barrier to the integration of Somalis in Sweden. It has far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities (or groups) and the nation at large. These consequences are psychological, socio-economic and political.

Psychologically, discrimination impacts on the individual's motivation and self-drive and self-esteem. That in turn affects the individual's stability in the sense that it would be difficult for the person to invest, psychologically, in Sweden for him/herself or for the sake of his/her children. Discrimination also has the potentiality to drive people into an inward looking mentality whereby they identify more and more with their group and less and less with the host society. This is because people who are discriminated against often assume or feel that they are collectively victimised because they belong to a certain group (i.e., ethnic, national, religious, gender, etc). Turning to our case, from an integration viewpoint, the identification with or attachment to one's own group increases the risk for Somalis to further isolate themselves from mainstream Swedish society.

Socio-economic discrimination prevents Somalis from reaching their full potential in society. It also hinders them from participating in societal activities such as education, employment, etc, as full-equals. Indeed, discrimination in society, flies in the face of most major policy areas e.g., education, employment, health, housing, etc. In particular, it hugely undermines the

efforts Somalis make to achieve desirable outcomes in education, employment, housing, etc, that are on par with members of the host society.

Politically, discrimination contributes negatively to inter-group relationships. Indeed, it is often the source of conflict between groups in society; has the potential to sew the seeds of discord between people, creating a wedge between them; and, makes those discriminated to accumulate grievances against those who discriminate. By contrast, the accomplishment of a more fair and equitable condition for all creates a more harmonious and cohesive society. However, these virtues may never be realised as long as widespread prejudices and discrimination against minorities (e.g., Somalis) prevail.

By and large, discrimination contravenes the fundamental objectives of Swedish Integration Policy. One of those objectives is specific and aims to prevent and combat discrimination, xenophobia and racism in society. Discrimination is also detrimental to the very essence of integration process itself since it compromises the willingness of Somalis to integrate into Swedish society. The willingness of a group to incorporate or be incorporated into society is, after all, one of the most important determinants of integration (Weiner, 1996). Speedier integration on the part of Somalis is thus ruled out as long as they experience discrimination in society.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8 CULTURE AND RELIGION

This chapter highlights ‘excessive’ cultural and ‘religious’ differences between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes as problematic to their integration in Sweden. The main ‘differences’ in culture stems largely from the intensity individuals attach to the role of the ‘family’. Whilst ‘native’ Swedes attached less emphasis on family bonds (and more on personal independence, self-reliance and ‘autonomy from family’), for example, Somalis emphasis the importance of family/clan network relationships over their individual goals – making it virtually impossible for individual Somalis to turn away from their family/clan or undertake an independent life.

With respect to religion, this chapter highlights the anxiety of the host society about Islam, the religion Somalis subscribe to, as a major source of contention which in turn has great implications for their integration into mainstream Swedish society. In particular, the lack of demarcation between Somali cultural practices (equated to *state*) and Islam (*religion*) coupled with the relatively high degree of religiosity among Somalis in the backdrop of a highly secular Swedish environment makes interaction with members of the host society almost impossible. Moreover, Islam is perceived in Sweden as a ‘threat’, both literally and figuratively, hence the immense opposition and suspicion towards Islam as a religion. The literal ‘threat’ of Islam views Islam as a security threat (given global tensions, e.g., terrorism, etc). The figurative ‘threat’ views Islam as incompatible with Swedish way of life.

8.1 Culture

Culture is a complex and contested concept (Williams, 1983:87). It is used differently and means different things to different people, hence, the difficulty in ‘conjuring’ its ‘essence and meaning in a few words or phrases’ (Jenks, 2003:1). Indeed, culture encompasses a broad array of societal issues, i.e., from ‘everything’ one ‘needs to know to become a functioning member of that society’ to ‘the entire way of life of a people’ (Swindler, 1986:273; Sewell’s, 1999; Benhabib, 2002). It includes peoples’ behaviour, pattern of thought, actions, unique experiences, traits, values, customs, beliefs, morals, rituals, conventions, principles, standards, law, *artefacts*, etc (see Benedict, 1935; Malnowski, 1944; Sorokin 1947; Marshall, 1998). It entails ‘a concrete and bounded world of beliefs and practices’ (Sewell, 1999:39); and, a ‘clear’ and ‘delineable whole’ that is often ‘congruent with a population group’ (Benhabib, 2002:4). More specifically, culture is defined as: a ‘system of symbols and meaning’ (Schneider, 1972:38, Keesing, 1974:79-81; Geertz, 1983) that is ‘learned’ (Coon 1954) and socially ‘transmitted’ from one generation to the other (Kroeber, 1952; White, 1947), through the process of socialisation (Brown and Selznick, 1955) and social interaction (Parsons & Shils, 1951). Through these processes, individuals learn how to become members of their respective cultures or society. They do so by internalising the norms, values, meanings and symbols of their culture or societies.

‘Culture’ is important because it determines behaviour, ‘feelings and motivation’ (Strauss & Quinn, 1997:5). It is also the standard by which ‘people are judged’, i.e., sets the rules for

what is ‘appropriate or inappropriate’ in society (Axelrod 1986:1097, see Fent, 2006). Moreover, culture is ‘part of the way people give meaning to their world’ (Phillips, 2007:15).

Last but not least, ‘culture’ is both the unifier and differentiator of peoples across the world. It is a unifier in the sense that it not only provides a ‘clear coherence and order’ to its adherents, but it is also the ‘basis for which stable identities’ in a society is formed (Featherstone & Lash, 1999:1). It is the differentiator in that it is what demarcates one group of people from the other (cf. Bhopal, 1997). This dual and contrasting function of ‘culture’ (i.e., of unifier and differentiator) resonates with Benhabib (2002:1), who concludes that ‘culture has become a ubiquitous synonym for *identity*’ (i.e., as the ‘marker and differentiator’ of different groups of people).

8.1.1 Culture: A *priori* assumption

Culture formed the basis for some important *a priori* assumptions in this research. The first assumption held that: Somali culture deviated significantly from Swedish mainstream culture. This assertion explained why many of the fundamental ‘differences’ between Somalis and Swedes existed in the first place. The second assumption viewed *cultural differences with ‘native’ Swedes* as the reason(s) why Somalis find it difficult to integrate into mainstream Swedish society. In respect to the latter, it was assumed that excessive deviation from Swedish

cultural standards explained the unfavourable socioeconomic position of Somalis (in education, employment, income, etc) in Sweden.

As it turned out, the overwhelming majority of research respondents concurred that Somali and Swedish cultures were *very* or *excessively* different. Many of these respondents emphasised the lack of commonalities between the two cultures by deploying similar semantics such as: the two cultures were ‘*at odds*’, ‘*incompatible*’, ‘*distant*’, ‘*far apart as they can possibly be*’, ‘*being in clash*’, ‘*being in conflict*’, etc. A few respondents went even further to suggest that the two cultures had *nothing in common*. Abdirashid, a 51 year old male respondent reinforces the above:

I cannot think of one area where the two cultures are similar. It is not only about culture. Look, they are also difference in ethnicity, religion, historical experiences, you name it.

Indeed, the bulk of the deliberation on *culture* with the research participants compared and contrasted many of the wide ranging purported differences between the two cultures. These cultural differences were said to exist in almost all societal spheres, i.e., ideological, religious, social, economic and political, among others. In particular, differences in family relationships, religious beliefs, gender relationship patterns and attitudes towards authority (the family/clan) were among some of the recurrent examples highlighted as ‘evidence’ of the where Somalis differed with Swedes culturally. For more on gender relations, refer to Chapter Nine.

8.2 Individual Autonomy versus Inter-dependence

The main ‘difference’ between the culture of Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes, however, stemmed largely from the intensity individuals attach to the role of the ‘family’ and the influence of the latter on the lives of the former. ‘Native’ Swedes, for their part, attached less emphasis on family bonds. Instead they emphasised individual independence, self-reliance and autonomy (from families). In the Somali community, on the other hand, there are intense networks of the family/clan relationships which make it virtually impossible for an individual to turn away from family/clan or undertake an independent life. In other words, Somalis' first loyalty was not to the wider society but to their own families/clans. This was likely to give rise to tensions since Somalis were expected to behave like ‘responsible’ Swedish citizens, who were personally responsible for their actions/inactions and obligations to the wider society rather than their clan.

8.2.1 Swedes as ‘Individually Autonomous’

‘Modern Swedish family relationships’ are characterized by ‘individual autonomy’ (for adults and children), the ‘celebration of the couple’ (not the ‘family’), ‘independence from the family’, ‘gender equality’, ‘democracy’, ‘shared responsibilities, negotiations and ‘decision-making’, ‘fairness’ and ‘equity’ (Ahlberg *et al.*, 2008:79; Liljeström & Özdalga, 2002:13; see Hobson, 2003). These outcomes are inextricably linked to Swedish welfare, whose policies

have played an important role in restructuring ‘family’, its roles and influence over its members, over the years.

Indeed, the welfare state has been proactive (through its family policies) in extending generous social and economic rights and benefits to all its citizens. This in turn has rendered ‘native’ Swedes to rely less on their ‘families’ and more on ‘society’, i.e., welfare state (cf. Liljeström & Özdalga, 2002:13; see Trägårdh, 1990). Arguably, this has also strengthened the alliance between ‘individual’ Swedes and the welfare state.

In this research, the main tendencies attributed to ‘native’ Swedes included an emphasis on personal independence, self-reliance, owning and creating one’s destiny, among others – making the individual less bounded to his or her family, its collective norms and rules. Indeed, as argued, Swedes were largely responsible for shaping and ‘owning’ their personal destinies. To a number of research respondents, Swedes relied upon their own potentialities rather than ‘wait for salvation’ from his or her own ‘family or kinsman’, as one official respondent puts it, indirectly alluding to the latter as being the case of Somalis in Sweden. Swedes, it was further argued, set, achieved and solely ‘owned’ their own personal goals, attainments or accomplishments (cf. Hsu, 1963; Hofstede, 1994; Triandis, 2004). The goals and accomplishment referred to here, included education, career, spousal and marital relationships, among others.

Moreover, it was often said of ‘native’ Swedes that they ‘acted as they pleased’, ‘made their own decisions’ and ‘owned the outcomes’ or ‘consequences’ for the decisions they made, to borrow some of the paraphrases of the respondents. Another common assertion among respondents was that, Swedes were free to associate or disassociate with whom they chose at will, precisely because relationships were often less bonded in nature. All these traits were illustrative of the fact that Swedes, in their individual capacities, were less constrained by obligations from or towards the family, for example.

8.2.2 Somalis as a Clan-based society

Somali culture differs from Swedish culture because it is a clan-based culture. Among Somalis, the goals of the group (clan) are prioritised over individual goals. The individual is obliged to become subservient to his/her family and clan. According to a number of respondents, Somalis, as individuals, did not ‘own their destinies solely by themselves’, to use the paraphrase of one respondent. As argued, it was not uncommon for Somali families (and their clans, whenever required) to take a key and decisive interest or role in the individual’s path to education and career, or in influencing and determining who that individuals marries or associates with (e.g., friends, business partners, etc), among others.

Thus mutual interdependence and reciprocity were important pillars in the Somali clan/family arrangements. Indeed, the whole clan constellation obligates Somalis to become intrinsically

collective in orientation. This was reinforced by Hirab, a 55 year old male respondent, who explains:

One is not only indebted to but is also expected to pay back to his or her relative in one way or another, should that benefactor's hour of need arise.

Moreover, subservience to the family and the clan was part of the socialisation process of Somalis. From the very early ages, Somali children, for example, learn to identify with their clans. They do so by learning to memorise their genealogical family roots – which often spans over many centuries. In doing so, Somalis expect their children to trace connections to people they are related to (e.g., through a common ancestor).

Indeed, Somalis children become socialized to 'care for' as well as to respect numerous persons who take the titles of 'uncles', 'aunties', 'cousins', and many more, family relations, as a manifestation of the 'interdependence' between individuals. Note even clan members who stand genealogically remote to the child will assume such 'close family relation titles' among Somalis.

8.2.3 Revisiting Inter-dependence versus Independence (Individual Autonomy)

As deducible from the above, the notions of dependence (or inter-dependence) and independence (or self-reliance and autonomy from the family) were ascribed to Somalis and Swedes as some of the main tendencies that differentiated Somali and Swedish cultures, respectively. It was also clear, from the deliberations with Somali respondents and Swedish officials, that the two respondent groups emphasised the pros and cons of these tendencies from the vantage points of their own socialisation processes and cultural experiences. For Somalis their preferences and sympathies lay with inter-dependence (or dependence) among groups rather than individualism, self-reliance and autonomy from the family. Conversely, Swedish officials emphasised the importance of the latter rather than the former tendency in society. To illustrate, a number of Somali respondents, for example, highlighted the negative connotations of ‘independence’, ‘self-reliance’ and ‘personal autonomy’ by individuals. Such a tendency was often regarded by some Somalis as ‘asocial’, ‘egoistic’ and ‘selfish’. Swedish official respondents, by contrast, viewed the sanctity of ‘independence’, ‘self-reliance’ and ‘personal autonomy’ as something ‘non-negotiable’, something ‘worth cherishing’ and ‘worth striving after’.

As alluded to previously, differences in socialisation processes and cultural experiences are invariably responsible for which world view an individual or group adopts. Whilst Somalis inculcated ‘inter-dependence’ (or ‘mutual dependency’) into their children, from the very early ages of childhood, Swedes emphasised ‘independence’, ‘self-reliance’ and ‘autonomy from

the family'. Focusing on the latter, as an illustration, it was discernible from the deliberation with respondents that "age Eighteen", – the year for Swedish maturity – was regarded by most Swedes as the point when 'true' 'independence' (or 'self-reliance'), including its symbolism and imperativeness among Swedes comes vividly into the fore. This is the age when most Swedes expect (or are expected) to move out of their parental home to their own accommodation. Eighteen also signals for Swedish youngsters to prove their 'independence' and the challenge that they can live separately without necessarily becoming dependent on their parents. This was reinforced by Fawz, a 38 year male old respondent:

Swedes who turns eighteen knows well that they live on borrowed time since they, their parents and society expects them to move away from the parental home at the earliest opportune time possible. For most Swedish youngsters, living independently is the initiation rite of passage to adulthood.

Unsurprisingly, some Swedish official respondents viewed 'inter-dependency' or 'dependency', as is the case with Somalis in negative light. They argued, for example, that such a tendency went against the ethos of Swedish autonomy since it wrecked the self-worth, esteem, respect and confidence of individuals in society. It was, as they argued, tantamount to 'surrendering one's destiny to the dictates of others', as one respondent puts it.

8.3 The Clan Phenomenon

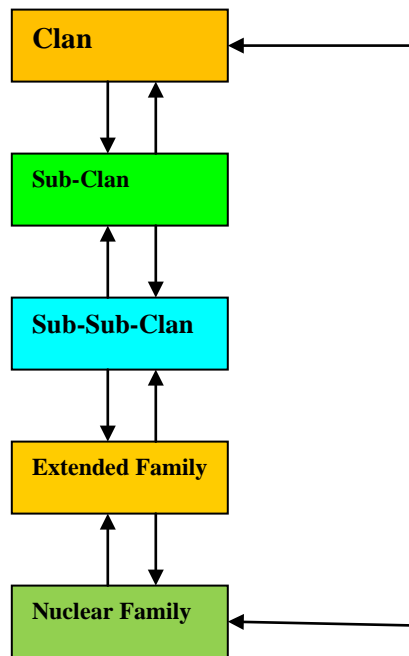
This sub-section argues that the clan, an overwhelming important phenomenon in Somali culture, feeds into the overall incompatibility between Somalis and Swedish cultures. This is partly because the clan epitomises a cultural orientation that greatly contrasts with the Swedish way of life. Moreover, and more importantly, the clan is the basis of the protracted divisions and antagonism among Somalis themselves, and by implication, acts as an obstacle to their successful integration into mainstream Swedish society.

A clan is defined as a unilineal kin group that claims its origin from a common ancestor (Farber, 1968, Lewis, 1999). A clan can either be patrilineal or matrilineal (Farber, 1968; Beals & Hoijer, 1965; Kroeber, 1938). The patrilineal clan traces its descent from a common male ancestor whilst the matrilineal clan traces its origin from a common female ancestor (Farber, 1968). Somali clans are patrilineal in nature.

Somali society is made up of several clans. Each clan subdivides into several sub-clans which subdivide into several sub-sub-clans. A sub-sub-clan consists of numerous extended families. An extended family consists in turn of a number of closely related nuclear families – often, brothers and male consanguineal cousins and their families (Farber, 1968). The nuclear family is the lowest stratum in the hierarchical Somali family clan constellation as shown in Figure 8.1.

Loyalty among Somalis is, therefore, first and foremost to their clan families and not to the wider society.

Figure 8.1: Hierarchy and Loyalty in the Somali Clan Constellation.



Source: Developed as part of this Study.

The clan is and has always been overwhelmingly a key and integral part of Somali society. It serves as the main social structural and organisational unit around which many aspects of societal life, be it individual, familial, social, cultural, economic, political, religious, etc, are organised. Thus for Somalis, the clan is more than a mere form of human relationship or inter-relatedness, (i.e., family or kinship).

Indeed, as the analysis in this research reveals, the role of the clan to Somalis are numerous and varied. First and foremost, the clan is the basic transmitting mechanism for Somali culture (i.e., the conveyor of Somali tradition), and the means, by which societal norms, customs, morals and ethics are communicated to and preserved for present and future Somali generations. This makes the clan an essential and significant expression of the Somali way of life. It plays an important role in explaining how Somalis see and approach the world around them.

Secondly, the clan is the arena for cooperation, mutuality, dependency or interdependency, and reciprocity among Somalis. Most of these notions (mutuality, reciprocity, etc) occur across the whole clan constellation from the clan-level to the sub-clan to sub-sub-clan to the extended family, and finally, to the level of the nuclear family. Although coordination across these entities may be set into motion when necessary, some matters (e.g., specific individual or family goals) may be dealt with autonomously of the clan (at sub-clan, sub-sub-clan or extended family levels). Others may be coordinated with the clan.

Thirdly, the clan acts as a social differentiation mechanism – a boundary-marker – that enables people to identify differently with different clans. Indeed, all Somalis are by association members of one clan or the other. They associate with one another, e.g., they get involved in social, economic activities and political activities, among others, based on their clan affiliations. The reason is because there is often greater trust and mutual obligation, as well as,

the means to enforce or rectify breaches in trusts or contracts between members of the same clan, than would be the case, between members of different clans.

Fourthly, the clan is the traditional legal authority or institution in Somali society. It spells out, reinforces and regulates relationships among members – to which members are obliged to respect and comply. The legal power the clan wields is sustained by the authority of clan male elders (cf. Lewis, 1999, Farber, 1968). Note, though, clan rules and regulation are unwritten. Nonetheless, they are spelt out orally and transmitted from one generation to another.

Fifthly, the clan is prominent in matters of compensation. This is often the case where victims and their families have to be compensated in the event of severe crimes such as indecency, rape, injury and murder. Due to the degree, gravity, seriousness, and sheer consequences involved, certain types of issues (crimes) are not normally resolved at the levels of the family through the sub-clan level. Indeed, there are customary rules, praxis and precedents that provide guidelines of how matters of compensations are dealt with both within clans and between clans.

Sixthly, the clans often act as a strong social control mechanism. Undoubtedly, inherent in the Somali system, is a strong social control mechanism. The hierarchy in Figure 8.1 demonstrates that these multiple units, from the clan downwards to the nucleus family, demand multiple

loyalties from individuals. These units have enormous influence over the behaviours, choices, priorities, orientation, etc, of individual clan members. Thus individual may, consciously or unconsciously, have to 'check' and weigh the consequences of their behaviour, choices, priorities, etc, before they act or embark upon an action.

The functions of the clan among Somalis should not be underestimated. It was certainly not limited to the previous list (points 1-6). Among the recurrent clan functions, also included, the clan as, the basis for accruing identity and a sense of pride; safeguarding individuals from isolation and loneliness (given the expansive network to which individuals could draw rich and deep relationships from); furthering the interest and welfare of its members; standing up for the rights of a member where others who had obligations (e.g., family) failed to meet those obligations; the clan as according physical and emotional security to its members; guaranteeing the right of members throughout their lives; providing deterrence and defense against external aggressions from other clans, and where possible enter into pacts and *détentes* with other clans to further and maintain peaceful coexistence with them.

8.3.1 The Clan in Pre-migration Context

Although the clan has benign functions, it is also the source of widespread conflict and divisions among Somali clans. In Somalia, clans have often competed and clashed over meagre resources. They jostled for positions and influences with the aim to dominate and or

gain greater stakes in the socio-economic and political spheres of society. Successive regimes in Somalia also ensured that clans were at loggerheads for their own political ends. Clan divisions were manipulated, and clan identities politicised. For example, whilst loyal clans were rewarded with economic gains and political power, those perceived as disloyal clans were denied the same opportunities (World Bank Report, 2005, Report No. 36032). As a consequence, clan politics became highly polarised over the years, culminating in a civil war fought along clan lines from 1991 onwards.

8.3.1.1 The Clan eclipses the State

A number of research respondent accentuated the importance Somalis attached to their respective clans was so great that it often ‘eclipsed the state’ itself, to borrow the paraphrase of one respondent. The reasons were twofold. First, the clan had the interest of its members at heart whilst the ‘state’ had not. The distinctiveness of the clan (see above) reinforces this. Secondly, the state, by contrast, was a relatively new phenomenon, a phenomenon that came about with the departure of colonialism in the early 1960. As argued, the modern nation state and its institutions, as inherited from colonial rulers, were ill-suited in harnessing the cultural, social, economic and political aspirations of the population. Moreover, the state came to serve the interests of a tiny elite who were more concerned in advancing their self-interest rather than that of the wider public.

In all, it is fair to conclude that the brief history of Somalia's experimentation with statehood was, unfortunately, unsuccessful. It was an experimentation mired by dictatorship, suppression, corruption, misappropriation of public resources and nepotism – tendencies that compromised good governance and eroded people's trust in government – which ultimately contributed to the ensuing intermittent and protracted civil war fought along clan lines, which in turn led to the demise and eventual collapse of the state itself.

8.3.2 The Clan in Post-migration Context

The overwhelming majority of Somali research respondents endorsed clanism as problematic to their integration into Swedish society. Clanism here connoted the belief in one's clan supremacy – the idea that one's clan is socially, culturally, spiritually, even biologically superior to other clans.

As argued, clanism had a negative impact not only on the inter-Somali clan relationships, but also on the integration of Somalis (as a group) into the mainstream Swedish society. With regards to the first, clanism created and fostered divisions and antagonism between and within different Somalis clans. In respect to the latter, Somalis needed to be internally cohesion as a group, before one could talk of integrating into mainstream Swedish society successfully. Clearly, a 'fragmented' group would have more difficulties in integrating into another more

cohesive group, hence, the need of the former to attain stability and internal cohesion within itself before integration with the latter can occur.

8.3.2.1 Inter-Clan Relationships

As reported, clan divisions and antagonism among Somalis in Sweden was particularly rife in early and mid 1990s. This period coincided with the influx of Somali refugees in relatively large numbers into Sweden. It was also a period when the memories of the civil war were still fresh in the minds of many. Many had, undoubtedly, witnessed the harsh justice inflicted upon them by rival clans. Some were direct victims, and bore physical wounds. Others had family members or close relatives maimed or killed by rival clans. The common denominator for these refugees was the mutual animosity they felt towards each other (as members of different clan family) in Sweden. Hassan, a 37 year old male respondent recalls how charged the atmosphere between Somali rival clans was in the 1990s:

The mood then was one of acute antagonism, rivalry and suspicion. People who were friends, neighbours, classmates or work colleagues back in Somalia were suddenly not in talking terms in Sweden.

It should be noted, however, that the ‘friendliness’ or ‘neighbourliness’ among different clan members in Somalia, as described above by Hassan, may have been superficial since hostilities between these clans remained latent in ‘peace times’, but nonetheless, became activated once the Civil War broke in Somalia broke out.

8.3.2.2 *T-Centralen: The Arena of Clan divisions and Antagonism*

In order to illustrate this tension the role of Stockholm's main Central Train Station, popularly known as *T-Centralen*, as an arena (i.e., one location) in which clanism operated (including clan loyalties, rivalries, divisions and antagonism) amongst Somalis in Sweden in the early and mid 1990s is highlighted. *T-Centralen* was the main venue where many members from different Somali clans, particularly, from the larger clan families, notably, the Hawiye, Darood and Isaaq congregated to socialise (for more on Somali clans, see Appendix 12). It was where, members of these clan families 'laid claim' to specific localities (e.g., cafés and restaurants) in or within the precincts of the Central Train Station, as places where *only* their members could meet.

Naturally, these localities were public spaces and open to all. Nonetheless, there were unwritten codes amongst Somalis that, if they belonged to a 'rival' clan, then that or those facilities were 'no-go areas' for them. Ironically, the Swedish owners of those facilities knew little (if nothing) of the internal dynamics and intrigues that transpired between the various Somalis using their premises.

As reported, Somalis went to the *T-Centralen* (Central Station) to catch up the latest hearsay about what was happening in Somalia. Among the questions of interest for these Somalis included, how their respective clans fared in the conflict (i.e., were they winning or losing?);

whether their clan was on the offensive or defensive; whether their clan was planning a counter-offensive; what their warlords were saying or up to, etc. Moreover, the need to congregate separately in different venues was also borne out of the need for privacy. Gossip and jokes against rival clan or clans, usually offensive in nature, were often made, hence, the need to self-segregate along clan-lines. Furthermore, the 1990s was a period when the many Somalis were new to the country, had not learnt Swedish and remained overwhelming unemployed. It was a period when Somalis had little to do. The past-time thus served to counter the void in the lives of most Somalis.

As alluded to previously, whilst most Somalis went to 'their' respective rendezvous purely to socialise and as a 'break' from 'biting isolation', as one Somali research respondent put it, others went there to back their respective clans in Somalia, both morally and materially. The latter group was keen for their respective clans to come out of the Somalia conflict victoriously. Among them were 'clan leaders' in Sweden who went round raising money from their clans. These funds would then end up in the hands of clan warlords in Somalia and help in their endeavour to outdo other rival clans militarily. In doing so, one could argue that Somalis in Sweden (as were others from the Diaspora elsewhere) fuelled the inter-clan conflicts in Somalia.

8.3.2.3 The Ease of Inter-Clan Conflict

As we have seen, the 1990s was a period when inter-Somali clan contacts were at their lowest ebb. Few Somalis dared to reach out to meet and or exchanged ideas with members of rival clans. However, the atmosphere between ‘rival’ clan members in Sweden has since changed markedly (although this does not mean that the prevalence of clanism among Somalis has been eliminated). There are two probable reasons that may have contributed to this development. First, the contact with a new setting and a new society has made many Somalis to reflect on whether there is a need for the type of rivalries described above. Indeed, as one Somali respondent pointed out, the ‘petty divisions we have are not recognized by the ordinary Swedish citizen, and if they were, these would be perceived as undesirable’. Secondly, for many Somalis, the results of clan conflict in Somalia were pretty obvious. Clan conflict has clearly resulted in more misery, death and destruction for all irrespective of which clan one belonged to. The nation [Somalia] and its institutions have collapsed giving Somalia the status of a failed state. Thirdly, as time passed by, and with many Somalis pursuing language and adult education courses, others finding work and becoming established in the sense of having families and children to look after, the urge for wasteful ‘past-time’ has declined as a consequence. Indeed, the visibility of Somalis in places like Stockholm Central Station (*T-Central*), other than for purposes of travel has been severely reduced. In part, Somali ethnic organisations and individually-run rendezvous in suburbs such as Rinkeby and Tensta where Somalis predominate, have been instrumental in reducing the need for meeting at the Central Train Station, among others. Nonetheless, there is a tendency that the rendezvous in the

suburbs are still frequented along clan lines despite the reduced tensions among ‘rival’ clan members in Stockholm in recent years.

8.4 Religion: Schism between the Sacred and the Secular

This section highlights the schism between Islam (a religion Somalis ascribed to), and Swedish secularism (which is strongly secular), as a major source of contention that has great implications for the integration of Somalis and Sweden. In particular, the lack of demarcation between Somali cultural practices (equated to *state*) and Islam (*religion*) on one hand, and the apparent relative high degree of religiosity among Somalis in the backdrop of a highly secular Swedish environment, on the other, were endorsed as problematic by the overwhelming majority of respondents. Somalis, as it were, had to separate between the sacred and the secular if they were to receive the desired interaction with members of the host society, and to receive acceptability from the latter.

As underscored, Sweden is a highly secularized society. It is a country where religion and religious symbols displayed in the public domain hardly bode well with majority in society. Also as accentuated, when *the* religion in question happens to be Islam, and *the* symbol, Muslim veils, hostility towards it gets even more compounded, given the immense opposition and suspicion towards Islam that is prevalent in Swedish society.

Indeed, Islam was broadly endorsed as being incompatible with Swedish way of life. The reasons were many and varied. For the purpose of constructing a narrative I have termed these *reasons* ‘the indictments against Islam’. The ‘indictments’ were as following: First, Islam was seen in Sweden as a ‘threat’, both literally and figuratively. The literal threat associated Islam with intolerance, violence, terrorism, etc. The figurative threat related to the kind of threat Islam posed to Swedish way of life (principles, norms, values, etc). Second, Islam was faulted for stifling people’s personal freedoms and liberties. Third, Islam was blamed for its unfair treatment of women. Fourth, Islam came under criticism for its ‘grandiose’ nature, including its tendency of not confining itself purely to spiritual matters; its transnational focus and outlook, as opposed to local; and, its ambitions for imposing Islamic penal code, known commonly as *Sharia Law*, perceived by many in the Sweden as ‘draconian’.

Whilst many Somali respondents confirmed the opposition and negative attitudes towards Islam in Sweden, they did however point to two further issues to highlight why Islam was seen unfavourably in Swedish society. The first was the ‘dearth of knowledge about Islam’ in Sweden, and the second, distortion of Islam by the media. These two points were interrelated, from the viewpoints of Somali research respondents in that, because many people in Sweden ‘did not have much knowledge about Islam’, they were likely to digest *any* material printed or broadcasted about Islam by the media – which, according to them [respondents], was after all, likelier to be biased against Islam and Muslims. For narrative purposes, I called these two accounts (i.e., the dearth of knowledge and distortion by the media), ‘rebuttal to the case against Islam’.

The latter part of this section deals with the *veil*. The veil as it relates to the Swedish and general contexts will firstly be deliberated before attention is briefly turned to how Somalis related to contemporary development of ‘more veiling’ amongst Somali women in Sweden.

The veil attracts strong views and opposition from the host society. It is the contention of this research that the more visibly veiled an individual is, the more difficulties s/he faces in terms of achieving socio-economic (not to mention cultural-) integration in Sweden. Likewise the more veiled members of a group were, the more difficulty it becomes for them to be accorded or receive acceptance by the host society.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that many negative attributes were attributed to the wearing of veils in Sweden. Some of the recurrent attributes include the following: Firstly, the veil was oppressive to women. Secondly, the veil inhibited meaningful interaction with Swedes. Thirdly, the veil was an obstruction to ‘practitioner – client relationship’ (in the context of health and social services settings). Fourthly, the veil presented numerous practical problems to the wearer in the streets, workplaces, etc. Fifthly, the veil posed potential ‘security risks’ to the populous or the nation. Sixthly, the veil affronts the ideal image and aesthetics of Swedes. Seventhly, the veil becomes even more ‘contemptuous’ when worn by children under the age of consent.

All in all, by choice or accident, the Somali community in Sweden happened to be a minority where Islam is not only a major node in its culture or high in its socio-cultural and religious order, but also where the two (Somali culture and Islam), are interwoven and inseparable. This makes Somalis come across to the host society, the establishment and the media as a minority group that prioritises the sacred over the secular which in turn had dire consequence for their acceptance by the wider host society. Thus the desire to live after the sacred (Islamic) rather than secular principles and practices only appears to compound and feed into the broader divergence, incompatibility and differences between Somalis and native Swedes.

8.4.1 Putting Secularism into Perspective

In order to understand Swedish secularism, and its intense opposition towards religion in general and Islam in particular, one has to understand what the term secularism means.

In literature, secularism is often evoked to infer ‘a decline of religion’ (Sommerville, 1998:249) at ‘individual’, ‘organisational’ and ‘societal’ levels (Yamane, 1997:109); ‘disengagement’ from religion (Sommerville, 1998:249); ‘beliefs and practices related to the “non-ultimate” aspect of human life’ (Yinger, 1967:19); and or, ‘rationalisation’ (Sommerville, 1998:249; Yamane, 1997; Bruce, 1992; Glasner, 1977). ‘At institutional level’, secularism refers to the ‘separation of state and the church in public domains’ – where, ‘religious activities, ideas and groups are vehemently discouraged (Sommerville, 1998:250-

51). This resonates with Rotenstreich (1962: 21, as cited in Weissbrod, 1983:189) who argued that ‘no concepts, ideas or values’ are ‘validated by religion’ or ‘revelation that stem from outside the human sphere’. To Ashforth & Waidyanath (2002:360), because of the ‘premium Western societies place on individualism’, people were bound to display ‘skepticism towards organizations that make spiritual claims – particularly to an ultimate truth rather than to a process of discovery’.

Secularism is dialectically opposed to religion. The two compete for the same truth or reality, albeit from different departure points. For example, whilst ‘everything material and abstract’ in religion ‘is derived’ from the supernatural, in secularism, ‘everything’ resulted ‘from human endeavour’ (Rotenstreich, 1962: 21, cited in Weissbrod, 1983:189). This echoes Ashforth and Waidyanath’s (2002:339) suggestion that religion and secularism are both ‘mutually excluding’ and ‘impenetrable’. This is also affirmed by Sommerville (1998:250-51) who says, the ‘secularist mindset takes’ a firm position against religion’, that the secularist ‘actively doubted’ and ‘displayed disbelief’ in religion. .

In the literature, a connection is often made between secularism and modernity. As Sommerville, 1998:249) argues, ‘secularisation and modernisation theories are intermeshed’. Basing his work on Durkheim and Weber, Yamane (1997:109) asserts, modernisation has ‘transformed the relation of man and god’. In Schultz’ (2006:171), ‘classical theory in secularization contends that as society becomes increasingly modern (usually as knowledge

expands through the processes of scientific rationality), religion becomes less and less important in that society'. To Schultz (2006:171), 'as people "advance" technologically and scientifically, they no longer need the magic of the past to offer explanation or meaning'.

Adapting from Yamane (1997:109), one could argue that, the impact of secularism in Sweden is pervasive, rendering the 'place of religion' in the social ordering of society as extremely minimal. Again in line with Yamane (1997:109), one could argue that both 'structure of religious organizations' such as Christianity', and, the 'orientation of individuals' (Swedes) have changed, adapting to the realities in society.

8.4.2 Sweden, the Secular Society

In line with Yinger (1967:19), secularism in Sweden comes across as the 'anti-thesis of religion. It is a sort of 'closed world-view that functions more or less like religion' (cf. Yinger, 1967:19). Indeed, research respondents often talked of secularism as 'a way of life' in Sweden (cf. Yinger, 1967:19), or as being a core value of the Swedish society and its welfare system/state.

Officially, though, the State and the Church are separate. This separation occurred as recently as 2000 (Gustafsson, 2003). However, the influence of the latter on people's live in Sweden

waned a long time ago (described by some respondents, in terms of, at least ‘half a century’ or, ‘one century’ ago). In reality this goes even further back in history to the 1600s when Sweden, like many other ‘Western societies, moved away from religious or divine authority’; witnessed ‘the triumphalism of secularism over religion’ (Schultz, 2006;170); and, ‘threw off the shackles of that great old-time religion’ (Schultz, 2006;171).

As the respondents stated, Sweden was perhaps one of the most secular country on earth. It is a country where people hardly refer to ‘god for help’, to use the words of one respondent; another saying, ‘religion is held at arm’s length in Sweden’. Paradoxically, for others the *only* time a ‘decorum of religion’ came into beam was in connection with ‘traditional’ (emphasising ‘not religious’) celebrations. Examples of these celebrations cited included Christmas and St. Lucia Day. Other occasions religion comes into beam in Sweden included baptism, weddings and funerals. To these respondents celebrating or taking part in these celebrations or occasions had very little to do with religion or people’s religious beliefs. On the contrary, these occasions have now become an integral part of Swedish cultural and traditional practices.

Moreover, in Sweden, religion is relegated to the private domain. Accordingly, the state and its institutions do not interfere in how people want to worship (privately), and clearly steer away from becoming drawn into religious matters. However, although the state and its institutions were neutral when it came to people’s faith, nonetheless, they favoured the

upholding of secularism as guiding principles in their day-to-day dealings with the general public.

Furthermore, as argued previously, the general public in Sweden (and not only the state and its institutions) guarded their secular traditions fiercely. This was because Swedes associate themselves closely with their Welfare System – a system that upholds secular laws and traditions above divine ones. Indeed, it was noted that Swedes belonged, as it were, to one big ‘secular’ family, as epitomised by the notion of *folkhemmet* (or people’s home). *Folkhemmet* is a conception used to evoke the image of harmony, consensus and solidarity across the classes in Sweden (see Baldwin, 1990; Scott, 1988, Scuzzarello, 2008). The underlying argument was that, religion, rather than bring in people together (e.g., across ethnicity, class, etc), often had the potentiality to create a wedge and disharmonious relationship between them.

Besides, there were many issues and ideas embedded in religion that were at odds with the Swedish secular system. The family, child-rearing, education, interaction across gender, community mobilisation to a given cause were some of the examples cited by the respondents as potential flash points with Islam, since these were also the same sphere of influence and focus for the Welfare State.

Undoubtedly, the ‘encroachment’ of Islam on Swedish secularism made many Swedes uneasy, hence, their opposition to Islam. It was a sentiment shared by Elisabet, an Immigration Officer who formerly worked in Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm:

We have Islam that has appeared suddenly from the horizon where its adherents are demanding special treatment. That by implicit means an infringement on the preserve of secularism... and that is why Islam is not viewed in a good light by most Swedes.

Indeed, Islam and Swedish secularism were presented as bipolar opposites. The two were portrayed as having no ‘neutral’ ground or basis for reciprocal respect and accommodation towards each other. As some Swedish official respondents pointed out, Swedes were all too aware of the consequences when politics and religion were ‘mixed’, as that would be ‘as combustious as adding petrol to fire’, as one of these respondents put it. This was often exemplified with ‘look what was happening in Muslim countries?’ These officials argued that the ‘constant’ socio-economic and political chaos witnessed in many Muslim societies, had a direct relation to their inability to separate politics from religion.

8.4.3 Religiosity among Somalis

A number of research respondents, particularly Swedish officials, observed that there was a prevalence of ‘a higher degree of religiosity’ among Somalis in Sweden when compared to other Muslim minorities in Sweden. Numerous examples were highlighted to support the

prevalence of deeper religiosity among Somalis in Sweden. They included: religiosity as gleaned from day-to-day conversations with Somalis; the demand for special dispensations at work or work placements (e.g.); declining to participate in certain work tasks; displaying outward religious codes or symbols; and ‘declining to greet’ people of the opposite sex. There were also two additional observations to highlight the religiosity of Somalis in Sweden. The first asserts, Somalis were ‘stubbornly religious’, and the second, that ‘life in exile exacerbated religiosity’ among Somalis in Sweden.

8.4.3.1 Religiosity as Gleaned from day-to-day Conversations

One of the more ‘obvious’ examples of religiosity among Somalis could be gleaned from day-to-day discussions amongst Somalis. As some Swedish officials observed, Somalis saw ‘nearly all issues’ through the prism of Islam. To these officials, ‘fate’ and the ‘supernatural’ figured regularly in their conversations with their Somali clients. Indeed, this could also be confirmed from the way some Somalis respondents talked of issues on a number of occasions during the course of interviews. References of divine nature often highlighted the acceptance of or the inevitability of ‘fate’, as an explanation or reasons why things happen. *‘If God wishes’; ‘It’s Gods will’; ‘God has written that’; ‘It is God’s case’*; etc., recurred frequently to illustrate how pervasive religious references in the day-to-day conversations among Somalis are. As pointed out, references to God underline the kind of attitude or cultural mind-set among Somalis that elevates fate or destiny whilst minimising the role or importance of

personal planning, control of one's destiny and or other issues associated with rationality, choice and individual discretion.

8.4.3.2 Demand Dispensations

Another example illuminated by Swedish officials as an illustration of the prevalence of religiosity among Somalis, particularly, in relation to other ethnic Muslim groups in Sweden (e.g., Bosnian, Iranians, Turks, etc) was with regard to the 'demands' (by Somalis) for dispensations from employers, institutions of training, etc, on religious grounds. Among the most recurrently cited 'demand for dispensation' included; taking breaks from work for prayers; taking time-off to attend Friday Afternoon prayers; insisting on having prayer rooms at work places, etc.

From the discussion with Somali respondents, it was apparent that it was not only 'those few most pious' Somalis who demanded taking 'pauses' from work tasks (or in other employment-simulated work environment such as 'back-to-work' trainings or activation programmes aimed at improving their employability) in order to say their daily prayers, but 'quite a sizeable' number of mainstream Somalis in Sweden.

These ‘demands’ were also an issue for officials who coordinate activation programmes. Activation programmes were normally initiated and ran, either separately or jointly, by municipalities and or the Swedish Labour Market Board (AMS). Confirming the view that Somalis displayed more religiosity than other Muslim groups in Sweden, Maria, an official involved in coordinating courses for a group of people in Rinkeby, who have not attended school in their home countries, pointed to the futility of trying to ‘encourage’ Somalis to remain on their courses, or ‘benches’ – as she put it – on Fridays as they take unauthorized breaks to attend Friday Afternoon prayers. Friday Afternoon prayers are viewed by Muslims as having important significance. Maria lamented:

We have a difficulty in keeping our rules on Fridays when people start streaming out in the middle of lessons at about 11:30 AM to ready themselves for Friday prayers.

From the experience of some Somali research participants, breaking from work for prayers was highly resented by Swedish employers. It was a ‘behaviour’ that was contrary to acceptable norms, standards, expected work ethics, etc, of Swedish work traditions and environments.

8.4.3.3 Declining to Participate in Certain Tasks

The refusal by Somalis to participate in certain work tasks when sent out on work placements was also viewed as a sign of their [Somali] deep religiosity in comparison to other Muslim

groups on training programmes. Examples of work placement cited included warehouses and supermarkets that handled pork (forbidden under Islam). This ‘refusal’ pertained to all types of tasks related to the handling of pork to include, processing, packaging, storing, selling, transporting, etc, of pork.

To a number of Swedish officials, this only made it difficult for Somalis to gain a foothold in the labour market. From their perspectives, it would have been a rational thing for Somalis to take up jobs, even if those jobs went against their ‘interest’ not least to accrue the necessary job experience. As argued, gaining experience was a first step in finding a job that was enjoyable or in line with one’s conviction. Officials found the alternative (i.e., to remain unemployed), as serving no one’s interest, be it the individual concerned or the wider society. Another argument was that, it was always easier for a person already in work to change jobs than it was for an unemployed person to secure work.

8.4.3.4 Outward Display of Religious Codes/Symbols

The kind of garments Somalis wore, were also cited as examples to illustrate the relatively deeper degree of religiosity among Somalis. For the more pious Somali men, it was observed, they wore buggy shirts, and ‘short trousers’ that covered just above their ankles. Also mentioned was that religious men tended to have long beards. For Somali women it was the veils (some of which were full-veils) they wore that indicated the depth of their religiosity.

Seeing school-going children, some of them very small in *hijabs* (Islamic head covers) was also taken as not only an example of parents imposing their religious values on children but also one that reflected on the increased religiosity among Somalis (see the sub-section on the ‘veil’, below). Indeed, the insistence of displaying these outward religious expressions among Somalis, particularly, in the public domains indicated to officials that religion played too significant a role in the lives of Somalis.

8.4.3.5 ‘Declining to Greet’

Another example raised by Swedish officials in line with the observances of Somalis vis-à-vis deeper degree of religiosity, related to the tendency of some Somalis to decline to shake hands with officials in the latter’s encounter with the former in their professional capacities, and, especially, where these encounters involve people of opposite sexes. Elisabet, an immigration official who had previously worked in Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm, recounts:

I can recall when it first occurred to me... there was this man who would not reciprocate in stretching his hand to greet me as I ushered him into my office. I did not know what to make of it at first. There were, of course, many emotions that went through my head at the time. The spontaneous one was anger. However, I was in a professional role which made it natural for me to keep negative emotions at bay, but nonetheless...

Other officials confirmed the phenomenon of declining to take the hand of person of the opposite sex among Somalis as not uncommon, pointing to their awareness of the similar occurrences in other social districts as well as in Employment Exchanges and Social Security Offices in Stockholm. These officials were acutely aware of the difficulties this presented to Somalis who declined to shake hands with potential employers (e.g., recruiters), and by implication, their prospects in the labour market.

8.4.4 Stubbornly Religious

Among the observations made by Swedish official respondents about Somalis was that they [Somalis] were ‘stubbornly religious’, to borrow the phrase from one respondent. This ‘stubbornness’ reinforced the perceived relative deep degree of religiosity among Somalis – a phenomenon that helped instigate and compound the problems Somali faced in society. The determination with which Somalis demanded their ‘religious rights’ on one hand, and their ‘inflexibility’ in not budging when they meet opposition to their demand, on the other, was portrayed as illustrative of the ‘obstinate’ nature of Somalis in matters pertaining to Islam.

The purported religious ‘stubbornness’ of Somalis was detectable from the irritation it caused to officials. Mona, a social worker at Rinkeby Social District, was one of the officials who was critical of Muslims in general, and, whose insinuations pertained as much to Somalis. To Mona, ‘all these demands’ both at individual level (e.g., dispensation from work to pray,

prayer room at workplaces, Friday afternoon prayer attendance, taking a day off to celebrate *EID*, etc.), and at the structural level, such as those that call for the establishment of religious institutions (e.g., independent Muslim schools, *madrassas* or local *Quranic* schools, ‘more mosques than already exists’, own burial sites, etc), served *only* ‘to enhanced the wedge that already existed’ between Muslims and the host society, and should therefore be resisted. These institutions, in the eyes of Mona, would also create separatism making attempts to integrate Muslims into mainstream Swedish society even more difficult in the future.

Revisiting the ‘obdurate nature’ of Muslims, to which Somalis were part, Mona painted a hypothetical scenario of how Muslims were goal-oriented, bent on achieving their end-goals against the background of ‘Swedish naivety’. To her this had the potentiality of leading to ‘disastrous consequences’ for Swedes in the future ‘if something was not done to curb the advances’ of Muslims in this country. Mona talks of ‘determined’ nature of Muslims in the wake of what she called ‘Swedish credulity’:

When you hear Muslims want to build a mosque, the chorus always goes something like this...‘let them built their mosque, it harms no one’. Then one hears they built their mosque. Do you think that is the end of the saga? Here come the secondary demands. They need their own burial grounds, own public holidays, own jurisdiction to apply in certain areas such as inheritance laws... there may come a time when some Muslims might even be tempted to start issuing their edicts on wide-ranging societal issues.

To Mona, it was the natives who always ceded ground in the face of this ‘steady escalation’ from Muslims. As Mona it:

It was not right for the native population to give in to the habits and customs people who come to Sweden. On the contrary, those who come to this country must conform to our laws of this land, and our Swedish way of life. As it stands of now, it is the host community that has to compromise its values in order to meet the demands of Muslims in this country.

8.4.5 Religiosity and Life in Exile

The analysis of this research points to the premise that the relative deep degree of religiosity noted among Somalis in Sweden has indeed been exacerbated by their life as ‘exiles’ in Sweden. As established from the accounts of research participants, migration has caused dislocation among Somalis in Sweden given that they were uprooted from their familiar environments (e.g., from families, friends culture, religion, etc) and ‘thrown into’ an unfamiliar one – one that was dissimilar in many ways. As a consequence, many Somalis felt isolated in Sweden. Moreover, they ‘felt unwanted in the new settings’, not least because many of them remain unemployed and are regarded by many in the host society as ‘outsiders’, to use some of the phrases from research participants.

As a result, a number of Somalis were said to have found solace in their religion, Islam. It was also arguable that by turning more to Islam, Somalis were able to reconnect or re-discover

their identities, find meaning as well the stamina to cope or withstand the challenges they faced in their adopted country. This characterization is similar to Weissbrod (1983:188), who confirms, ‘religion provides the cohesive values that seem indispensable in times of social upheaval’. The negative side, however, was that deeply religious Somalis tended to insulate themselves from mainstream life making the endeavours to integrate them into society much more difficult.

8.4.6 The Indictment against Islam

This sub-section deals with the more general issues surrounding Islam as perceived in Sweden. The themes outlined here were endorsed as the reasons why (a) Islam was seen as being incompatible with Swedish way of life, and, (b) why Swedes were vehemently opposed to and suspicious of Islam. We refer to these reasons as the *Indictment against Islam in Sweden*.

The indictments against Islam pointed to the following: (1) Islam was a ‘threat’ in Sweden, and, to the Swedish way of life; (2) Islam stifled people’s personal freedoms and liberties; (3) Islam treated women unfairly; (4) Islam was ‘grandiose’ in nature in the sense that it (a) had the tendency of not confining itself to purely spiritual matters, (b) was transnational in focus and outlook, as opposed to local, and, (c) had an ambition of imposing Islamic penal code (*Sharia Law*) to all, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

8.4.6.1 Islam as a ‘Threat’

Islam is perceived in Sweden, as in many other Western countries, as a ‘threat’. This threat is both ‘literal’ and ‘figurative’. The ‘literal threat’ was associated with acts committed by Muslims to harm both life and property in the West (to which Sweden was part). Here Islam was perceived to ‘thrive in’, ‘advocate for’ and ‘use’ violence as a means to achieve its end-goal. That end-goal seemed defused but was often characterised by Swedish official respondents, as the desire for Islam to ‘rule the world’, to borrow the phrase of one of these respondent. The ‘figurative threat’, on the other hand, pertained to the threat Islam purportedly posed to the ‘Swedish way of life’, its values and civilization or, more broadly, to ‘Swedish/Western democracy ideals, including, personal freedoms and liberties. I will limit my deliberation here to Islam as a ‘literal threat’ since the ‘figurative threat’ forms large part of subsequent ‘indictments’ (see below) that will follow shortly.

This ‘indictment’ was linked to contemporary world politics where Islam has more or less become synonymous with terror, violence and militancy. As Ziebertz & Riegel (2008:11) agree, the last decade, especially, ‘since “9/11”’, and the “war against terror”, many discussions have evolved from the topic of Islam’.

Cautious not to generalize, some Swedish official respondents introduced the term *Political Islam* to underscore that the struggle with Islam was not between the West and Muslims (the

majority of whom were referred to as ‘peace-loving like everyone else’) but one between the West and a tiny minority within the Muslim community who ascribed to Political Islam – a minority that was bent on reaching its goals through violent means.

Admittedly, what made the struggle with Political Islam precarious was that, it was much an idea as a movement. This made Political Islam an elusive enemy. It had no standing army, armaments or clear command and control structures. As one Swedish official lamented, ‘no military might would be able to crush Political Islam’, suggesting, ‘the only way to defeat it was by winning the hearts and minds of the broader Muslim majority.’

Moreover, ‘Political Islam’ and its adherents adapted to situations accordingly. For example, in the event of a crack-down on its organizations, these organizations had the tendency to dissolve, their members ceasing to become active or vocal and easily moving into the wider Muslim communities. When the crack-down comes to an end, organizations and their members may reappear in one form or another or go underground, which then becomes harder to detect from law enforcement perspectives.

Also introduced into the deliberation of ‘Islam as a threat’ was that of conceiving Muslims in Sweden or the West as the *enemy from within*, ‘the fifth column in society’, as it were. Nonetheless, there was less unanimity among respondents on this characterization. Indeed,

there were few respondents who were philosophically cynical, arguing that, it was human nature 'to have' or 'try to look' for an enemy 'even where there are none' to borrow some of their phrases. The following sentiments reinforced their arguments:

Helena, an Immigration Official:

I am sure if it was not Islam or Muslims, we would have found another monster to blame.

Eva, a youth employment adviser:

Had the Soviets been as strong and threatening as they were decades ago today... I am damn sure we wouldn't have focused so much on Muslims as we are doing now.

All in all, although Sweden and other Scandinavian countries have largely been spared from terrorist actions of a more serious global kind (e.g., those that occurred in Bali, New York, London and Madrid, etc), nonetheless, with increased globalisation, the fear from terrorism is as palpable in Sweden as it is in other Western countries.

8.4.6.2 Stifles Personal Freedoms and Liberties

It was argued that Islam had the tendency to curtail individual freedoms and personal liberties (e.g., freedom of worship, press, association, etc). The proponents of this arguments asserted that these virtues matter hugely in democratic societies like Sweden, and are hence, non-negotiable. To them, Islam ‘deserved’ to be ‘monitored’ in order to safeguard the ‘hard-earned liberties’ people in Sweden have come to take for granted. This is reinforced by Björn, an employment adviser with the Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm:

We cannot compromise or jeopardise our freedoms. Civil liberties are ingrained in, as well as inseparable from, our Swedish way of life. To give up on our freedoms and liberties just because others may feel uncomfortable would be inconceivable to say the least.

The proponents of this argument were critical of the prevalence of self-censorship in the Swedish media that emanated from the latter’s strive not to offend Muslim sensibilities, among others. To them this was uncalled for since freedom of expression (a fundamental pillar in Western democracies) and Muslim sensitivity were largely irreconcilable. Moreover, the chasm between the two (freedom of expression and Muslim sensibilities) was linked to the inability of Muslims to separate the sacred from the secular – a ‘constant’ source of consternation in the relationship between Muslims and their Western host societies.

In particular, how to protect freedom of expression, especially, when that expression went against the mainstream views, beliefs and or sensitivities of Muslims presented a dilemma in the West, including Sweden. This dilemma' was illustrated by how Muslim passions often 'ran out of control globally' in the advent of rifts between the Western and Muslims as a result of the above (see Appendix 13 for 'cited' examples).

8.4.6.3 Treatment of Women

The 'treatment' Muslim women suffer under Islam was another recurrent theme. Among the attributes endorsed to describe this 'treatment' included the way Muslim women were subjected to discrimination and direct segregation; the way they were denied ability to make own decisions both at the micro (family) and macro (societal) levels; how Muslim women were denied to hold positions of influence and authority in society; the way women came under the guardianships of male protégé or minders; and, how women were 'normally confined' to the house, among others. Muslim women had thus far fewer choices to make in order to exploit their full potentials in society to the maximum. They were often left out in pursuing education or their own careers, and often, ended up in early marital relationships.

There were other concrete examples cited in relation to the unfairness meted out to Muslim women under Islam. One of these was in relation to Islamic inheritance law where women or girls could only inherit half as much as their male counterparts (boys) acquired. Another example was that which involved compensations to victims where woman receives only half

the amount of what a man would get. Yet another example cited was how Muslim women were often stuck in abusive marriage relationships because their families and communities viewed divorce in a bad light.

Contrastingly, Swedish officials argued that Swedish women were ‘emancipated’. They argued both men and women in Sweden enjoyed equal rights and status in society. To exemplify this, the almost near equal representation of men and women in Swedish labour market and education were viewed, by Swedish officials, as being indicative of their favourable position in society. Indeed, because of their favourable position, Swedish women have attained a greater degree of personal, social and economic independence. It was concluded that the position of women in Sweden was favourable because society has managed to ‘take out religion out of the equation’, to borrow the phrase from one official respondent. By the same token, the reason why Muslim women took less prominent or visible roles in their respective societies (and in Sweden) was a consequence of their inferior treatment under Islam.

8.4.6.4 The ‘Grandiose’ Nature of Islam

The ‘grandiose nature’ of Islam encapsulated three interconnected themes. The first postulated that Islam was not confined to matters that were purely spiritual. The second, that Islam was as much transnational – in its ambitions, focus and strategy – than it was local. Third, Islam in

the West was associated with Sharia Law, its penal code, which was viewed as draconian and incompatible with Western ideals.

8.4.6.5 Not Confined to Spiritual Matters

As pointed out by a number of respondents, Islam was not a religion that was confined to spiritual matters. It was a way of life, as Muslims themselves readily point out. Indeed, Islam may encompass issues of spiritual nature such as daily prayers, giving alms to the poor, fasting, etc; however, it also dictates many other aspects of the lives of its adherents. These include cultural, socio-economic and political spheres, among others. It also determines the relations Muslims and non-Muslims would have vis-à-vis such societal spheres.

8.4.6.6 Never Local but Transnational

In addition, Islam was seen as a religion that was hardly local. Rather Muslims were ‘by nature’ likely to be transnational and, thus have transnational loyalties. Notions such as the *Ummah* (a single global Muslim community) or the *Khalifate* (a world Islamic state with no borders) whose ultimate goal was to rule the world using the *Sharia* (dreaded and perceived in the West for its harsh punitive measures) were all examples cited to portray the idea that Islam was more of a global enterprise than it was local.

Indeed, for the more pious Muslims, a true Muslim is by definition a global citizen. His/her loyalty thus lies with the global *Ummah*. One example of global solidarity to this effect, and to which respondents alluded to, related to *Jihad* (or Holy War), where Muslim men were known to fight alongside fellow Muslims abroad, even where they were considered by their countries of adoption as being on the enemy's side. Another poignant example pointed to the case where a number of Western Muslims have fought (or continue to fight) in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Iraq and other hotspots in order to take part in what they [Muslims] regarded was an obligation to stand by fellow Muslims against non-Muslim invaders.

8.4.6.7 Sharia Law

As a number of Swedish official respondents pointed out, many in Sweden opposed Islam because of its Sharia law. Sharia is a legal system based on 'the principles of Islamic law' (Ashwami, 1998:49). Although Sharia law encompasses all aspects of life such as social, economic and political, it is its legal penal code which is most dreaded in Sweden as in the West. Sharia's penal code defines crime and specifies punishments accordingly. Indeed, the extreme examples of the forms of justice lifted here included those against blasphemy, adultery, theft, etc. Under Sharia law, blasphemy is punishable with death; adultery by stoning; and, theft by amputation of hands and legs. It is the severity through which Islamic penal code hands its verdict against these 'crimes' – not to say those of blasphemy and adultery which hardly count as 'offences' in the West – that makes Islam and its laws sound or

look draconian to the average Swede. The following sentiments reinforced the opposition to Sharia law in Sweden.

Eriksson, a social worker with the Märsta Social District of Stockholm had this to say:

Islamic jurisdiction is intolerable. It is incomprehensible that such laws could be entertained by any society.

Eva, a youth employment adviser with the Rinkeby Social District of Stockholm affirms:

The slightest mention of Sharia law send jitters in most Swedes.

Indeed, some officials suspected that Sharia Law has support among ‘religious’ Muslims (including religious Somalis), and found it ironic that people who sought asylum in Sweden would ‘turn around’ to demand that the host society cedes ground to the very draconian laws fostered under their [Muslim] dictatorial systems, governance or set of beliefs in the name of religious autonomy. In retrospect, it was evident from the analysis of data that these officials were referring more to Muslims demanding religious rights and dispensations to accommodate their Islamic faith (in workplaces, etc) than the introduction of Islamic laws in Sweden.

Sharia law was also frequently juxtaposed with Swedish laws and its penal codes. To drive home the element of compassion with regards to the latter, it was often stressed that the

underlying objective of Swedish Penal Code was rehabilitative rather than punitive retribution. As one respondent forcefully put it, ‘the ultimate aim was to rehabilitate criminals rather than punish them for the sake of punishment’. And, although, the climate has harden in Sweden in recent decades vis-à-vis criminals (see Tham, 2001), ‘the law still reciprocates with mercy where remorse is shown’ by the culprit, to use the phrase of one official.

8.4.7 The Rebuttal of the Case against Islam

Somali research respondents agreed with many of the characterisation of Islam in Sweden, and the grounds of its ‘indictment’ against it (see above), at least in so far as the perspective of many in the host society were concerned. Naturally, they disagreed with how their faith, Islam, and issues surrounding it were perceived or portrayed in Sweden. Instead, they put greater emphasis on two further accounts which could count as ‘rebuttal’ to many of the ‘indictments’ leveled against Islam in Sweden. The first rebuttal pointed to a ‘*dearth of knowledge*’ about Islam in Swedish society. The second criticised the ‘*distortion of Islam by the media*’.

8.4.7.1 The Death of Knowledge about Islam

Many Somali research respondents felt that the overwhelming majority of the Swedish population, the establishment and the media, all suffered from a dearth of knowledge about Islam. A number of accounts were highlighted to back this assertion. Firstly, people in

mainstream society seemed to make little differentiation about how Muslims orientated themselves to their religion, i.e., whether they [Muslims] subscribed to a more moderate or extremist interpretation of their religion. As noted, Swedes lacked appreciation of the different schools of thought (or interpretations) within Islam. This is reflective of how Isir, a 32 year old female respondent put it:

There is a sort of fallacy in this country that all Muslims subscribed to one version of Islam, which I think is unfortunate because this makes it easier for all Muslims to be tarred with the same brush.

A recurrent theme amongst both Somali and Swedish official respondents was the need for differentiating between the ‘few extremists’ from the majority Muslims (often characterized as ‘moderate’, ‘peace loving’, and people ‘who wanted go about the lives as anyone else in this country’. Also pointed out was the need to correct the perception in society that religious extremism and fundamentalism were the sole propriety of Islam. As asserted, these traits were as prevalent in Islam as they were in other major world religions including, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism.

Furthermore, Islam may be a monolithic religion, but the way it was interpreted or practiced by its adherents differed across the world. Indeed, different Muslim societies around the world have incorporated Islam into their existing culture making it possible for differences and nuances within or between Muslims communities to be observed.

8.4.7.2 Media Distortion

The media has been strongly criticized for its intense and negative focus on Islam. Many Somali respondents were, indeed, concerned about the catalytic role the media plays not only in fanning hostility towards Muslims but also in perpetuated the constant ‘fear’ about, and hostilities toward Islam in Sweden. They argued the media frequently associated Islam with terrorism, oppression against women, and or to the apparent lack of integration by Muslims in Sweden. As Hassan, a 37 year old male respondent underlines:

The Muslim is the extremist, the perpetrators... the one over-represented in crime statistics. The immigrant as this or that... The demonisation of the Muslims in Sweden is a fact of life, thanks in part to the media.

8.4.7.3 Connection between the Dearth of knowledge in Society and Media Distortion about Islam

A link was made between the dearth of knowledge about Islam and distortion of Islam by the media. As alluded to, because Islam was generally and relatively unknown to many Swedes, they [Swedes] tended to believe what they read, heard or watched on mainstream media’ and take that ‘at face value’, which, as argued, was ‘often biased’ against Muslims, to borrow some of the phrases respondents used.

Indeed, the impartiality of the media and journalism itself was at times questioned when it comes to reporting about Islam or Muslims. As Ahmed, a 42 year old male respondent forcefully put it:

Journalism may pride itself in reporting impartially in its quest for truth. However, when it comes to matters relating to Islam, it's gloves are off. The portrayal of Islam in Western media simply leaves a lot to be desired.

Mariam, a 30 year old female respondent, had a slightly different point to make. She argued that the distortion of facts often fitted in with the sensalisation agenda of tabloids to boost their sales:

Tabloids were after selling. Whatever material that was sensational sold. Unfortunately, Islam fell under that category, of sensational material.

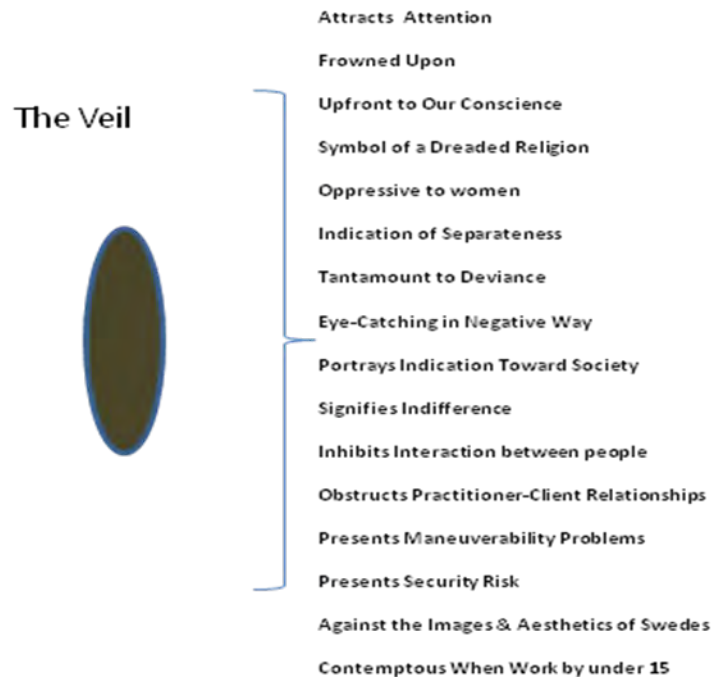
In all, there was a realisation, almost a resignation among some respondents that the negative focus as well as the depiction of Muslims as the 'other', was something that they will have to live with for years to come. However, they were hopeful that, as knowledge about Islam and Muslims begins to increase in society, and as the roles of second and subsequent Muslim generations in society becomes more visible and assertive, some of these negative contemporary characterisations would gradually wane.

8.5 The Veil

There are perhaps fewer contentious issues with Islam than that of wearing veils by Muslim women in Sweden. The reason is because the Muslim veil is seen as a strong religious symbol that makes as much a religious statement as it does a political one. The opposition towards the veil is thus multidimensional. This multidimensionality is reflected by the plethora of negative examples attributed to the veil by a number of respondents, notably Swedish official respondents.

In general, the sentiments and examples attributed to the veil indicated not only its adverse implications for the integration of Muslims (Somalis included) in Sweden but also its perceived ‘inappropriateness’, particularly from a Swedish cultural perspective. The semantics used by respondent to describe the ‘inappropriateness’ of the veil in Sweden were varied, indicative of the multidimensional nature of it within the Swedish society. Figure 8.2, below, summarises the many negative tags attached to the wearing of the veil in Sweden.

Figure 8.2: Negative Tags Attached to the Veil



Source: Developed as part of this study.

8.5.1 The Attributes to the Veil

The ‘inappropriateness’ of the veil in Swedish society was illustrated with a number of specific themes (see above Figure). Among the themes most endorsed by research respondents included, the veil as: oppressive to women; inhibiting meaningful interaction with Swedes; an obstruction in ‘practitioner – client relationship’ (in the health and social services, etc); presenting maneuverability problems to the wearer (e.g., in workplaces, etc); potentially posing ‘security risks’ to the population and the nation; and, as affront to the ideal image and aesthetics of Swedes. Moreover, as asserted, Muslim veils became even more ‘contemptuous’ when worn by children under the age of consent.

8.5.1.1 Oppressive to Women

The most common adverse attribute to the veil was that which associated it with the oppression of women. As alluded to by a number of respondents, Islam was viewed as a ‘woman-unfriendly ideology’, and a religion bent on rolling the gains made through the emancipation of women in general, and Swedish gender equality, in particular. The veil was therefore, conceived of as a mechanism employed by Islam to subjugate women, and to inhibit them from exercising their personal freedoms, as well as achieving their full potential in society. Moreover, the fact that the veil was viewed as having been ‘imposed upon women and not men’, and ‘by men upon women’, was enough to convince many critics of the

discriminatory nature of veils. As one Swedish official concludes, ‘the veil was in place to “allocate” and to “remind” women of their lower status in society.

8.5.1.2 Inhibits Meaningful Interaction with Swedes

The veil was also seen as inhibiting ‘meaningful’ interaction between Muslims minorities and the host society. It was, at it were, a marker that defined how individuals (including across gender) and groups in society related to each other. As a rule of thumb, the less a group adheres to wearing the veils, the more interaction that group expected from members of the host society and vice versa. The reasons for the rule of thumb needed no deeper indulgence or analysis, with respondents often saying ‘people in this country generally disapprove of the wearing of veils’ as one put it. As another exasperated Somali respondent put it, ‘they disapprove of you without getting to know you in more substantive manner just because you wear the veil’.

Indeed, from integration viewpoint, to wear or not to wear the veil has become a benchmark – the litmus test – for how Muslims in Sweden (including Somalis), as individuals and as a group integrate or are integrating into mainstream society. This is because many in the host society regard the veil as inhibiting both the socio-economic integration of Muslims (including Somalis) into the host society. In particular, the wearing of the veil was viewed as having

implications for the participation of Muslim women in the economic activities in society, especially with regards to education and labour market participation.

The veil was also viewed as an obvious obstacle to the cultural integration of Muslim immigrants in Sweden. As alluded to by a number of research respondents, Swedes have a strong tradition of encouraging conformity and uniformity in society to minimize differences and conflicts. Those who stand out are normally regarded as outsiders. According, the veil has become the *instrument* to gauge whether a group accepts the Swedish way of life or can be acceptable to the host society. Less veil wearing indicates that, that would be the case for both scenarios, whilst veiling or increased veiling by a group would indicate the opposite (i.e., lesser acceptance of, and by the host society). The following sentiment reinforced the notion of the veil as representing the ‘other’.

Björn, an employment advisor, had this to say of the veil:

To me the veil conveys difference. It is like saying, *we* are different and *we* will stay different forever. By going around with such clothing, one can only assume that *they* do not want to integrate. *They* have simply turned *their* backs on society.

8.5.1.3 Obstructs ‘Practitioner-Client relationship’

The veil, especially the full-veil, presented a ‘dilemma’ for officials when they encounter Muslim women in their official capacities, and more so where such an encounter occurred in *practitioner-Client* relationships. From the angle of a number of Swedish official respondents, it was, necessary to build working relationships with a client, not least, because of the former’s role as a change agent. Nonetheless, building such a relationship with, and more importantly attaining desirable outcomes in a client’s favour, becomes more problematic when clients are veiled. This was reflected by Sara, a social worker:

Having a direct eye-contact with the person one deals with is an absolute necessity. Factual expressions are as important communication method as verbal expression from my viewpoint. You can discern which state the person is in... whether that person is healthy, happy, sad, angry, and so on. Emotions hidden behind masks... I mean veils, are difficult to detect. That is why I think the veil is problematic.

8.5.1.4 Presents a number of Practical Problems

The veil presents numerous practical day-to-day problems such as crossing a busy road or boarding buses, trains, etc, to practical problems encountered at workplaces. Driving a car can, for example, become a dangerous endeavour for the veiled individual to undertake given the narrow peripheral view of that individual in comparison to other who do not wear the veil. Nonetheless, it was in working environments such as factories, etc., that the wearing of the

veil was seen as both ‘inappropriate’ and ‘dangerous’. It was argued, the individual who wear veils, put her work colleagues and even her workplace (work setting) all at risk, from a health and safety perspectives (due to the wearing of the veil). Moreover, it was conceivable employers viewed the productivity of workers wearing veils (particularly, full-veils) as falling short of their expectations. It was also assumed that the individual who wore a veil was likelier to encounter difficulties in manouvring around as they carried on with their work tasks, among others. Nevertheless, a slight distinction was made between ‘whole’ veil and the *Hijap* that covered only the head and ears of the wearer. Elisabet, an immigration officer, was among the officials who made this distinction:

I have no quarrel with some veils, especially the ones that only cover the hair. However, it is the wearing of the whole gown... that makes it impractical for them to perform the work assigned to them in workplaces.

8.5.1.5 Security Concerns

The veil also prompts security concerns. As alluded to previously, in this era of heightened security, the veil has come to represent a sort of challenge to law enforcement agencies both nationally and internationally, for the mere fact that they have to tread carefully between their duties of protecting the public and that of being considerate of people’s religious beliefs and sensibilities. From a security point of view, there were precedents of people who meant harm, and, who concealed themselves and their intentions in veils before attacking their targets. This particular example was related to the global scene and not Sweden. Nonetheless, it was

indicative of the fact that global concerns have become local when it came to the veil, as we saw elsewhere with the concerns about Islam in general (see above).

Two other bone of contentions with the veil related to (a) the refusal of Muslim women to have their photos taken without their veils in relation to identity and passport applications, and, (b) where Muslim women refused to ‘unveil’ their faces when requested to by immigration officers or other law enforcement agencies at ports of entry such as airports, seaports, border entry-points, etc, for reasons connected to security concerns.

8.5.1.6 Against the Ideal Image and Aesthetics of Swedes

Muslim veils were portrayed as being contrary to the ideal image and aesthetics of Swedish society. The veil in Sweden was viewed as abnormal not because it was different but because it was simply ‘unattractive’, ‘outmoded’ and ‘unfashionable’, to use some of the terms some Swedish official respondents associated with the veil. Indeed, to a number of these officials, the veil in Sweden belonged to the distant past – an example of past bondages that held women back, and which was out of tune with contemporary Sweden. As one official research respondent emphasised, that distant past was the ‘the era when priests were the masters of the land, and that no longer obtains here’. Other officials associated the veil with poverty and downtroddenness, traits that were incompatible with a modern affluent Sweden.

As mentioned by a number of respondents, we live in a society and era where fashion and the fixation of or about image is commonplace. What people wore, how they wore them, the signal their clothes radiate, etc, were constantly scrutinized, consciously or subconsciously, in society. Accordingly, the ideals and images of the 'veiled' woman contradicted that of the 'ideal woman' with the 'ideal cloths', 'as we are fed into through the mass media', as one respondent puts it. The 'ideal' woman was characterized as 'attractive', 'assertive' and 'goal-oriented', which contrasted with the 'veiled' woman, who, as argued, was viewed in society as a 'non-existent', 'unattractive', 'subdued', 'submissive' and 'unattractive' entity that was tied down by an 'inferior' culture.

In addition, veils were faulted for their colour. The colour of the veils was depicted as 'depressing' since they were black, a colour often associate with loss and mourning. Veils were also blamed for being 'all-weather', since they were worn constantly and on all occasions. As one respondent put it, 'it hardly mattered, whether it was a sunny day or not'. Moreover, the fact that there was no room in distinguishing casual wear from business when it came to the veil reinforced the latter's characterization of being 'out of place' in Sweden, from the viewpoints of some Swedish official respondents.

8.5.1.7 Contemptuous when worn by children under the age of consent

One observation established from the accounts of respondents was that the wearing of veils by children, under 15 (i.e., under the age of consent in Sweden), was now becoming commonplace in Sweden. For members of the host society, children in veils were something hard to comprehend. For one, this would be seen as tantamount to denying children their rights to their own childhood. Children, it was poignantly argued, could not cope with pressures and the bounds of control the veil entailed, among others. Moreover, the veil was portrayed as curtailing the potentials of the young person's ability to learn and to take part in some important aspects of societal life such as sports and physical education in schools, among others. As exemplified by some respondents, Muslim girls (including Somali girls) were known to have declined to take part in activities such as swimming, physical education and athletics – a vital part of school curricula - at the behest of their parents or significant others.

8.5.2 Somalis and the Veil

The vast majority of Somali women wear the veil. This could be confirmed from the women respondents of this research, where seven out of nine wore the veil. Some of these women wore the head-veils (a scarf), other had the *Hijab*, a veil that covered their heads and ears, and a few had full-veils. The adherence to or interpretation of wearing the veil among Somalis thus varied from person to person, and from family to family. Generally, although, most Somali women wore the veil out of religious obligation, other did so because of influences from peers

or other group pressures (e.g., the family, clan, etc). For others, the veil is, as one respondent pointed out, something all ‘sound grown up women’ have being socialised with and got used to, suggesting the cultural imperative of wearing the veil among Somalis.

In Sweden the wearing of the full-veil began to appear more and more among Somali immigrants. More women who did not wear the veils whilst in Somalia began to wear the full-veils in Sweden. As noted earlier, life away from familiar environment, as well as, the difficulties associated with being exiles seemed to have contributed to the choice of Somali women to wear veils in Sweden. Indeed, as a number of respondents pointed out, many Somalis have found solace in their religion since it compensated for the longing and isolation inherent in their ‘new’ lives in Sweden.

8.5.2.1 The Full-Veils Divides Opinion

Somalis in Sweden were divided over the issue of full-veils. The proponents of full-veils supported the wearing of full-veils on the ground that it was a religious obligation. The main reason of full-veils, they argued, was to ‘protect’ women from ‘unwanted gazes’. The presumption was that women who dressed ‘lightly’ drew unwarranted attention from ‘the prying eyes of men’, as one respondent put it. Others were categorical in arguing that [married] women under Islam were to be adored only by their husbands’, reinforcing the literal interpretation for wearing the veil. Overall, the attempts to prompt proponents of the

full-veil to elaborate more on their assertions about the full-veils were not forthcoming, since they affirmed that matters pertaining to full-veils were divine, fixed and, therefore, non-negotiable.

Opponents of full-veils, were, however, more forthcoming in their views. They opposed the full-veils on three grounds. Firstly, they argued the full-veil was something foreign to Somali culture and religious practices, and a relatively recent phenomenon that was introduced from Middle-Eastern cultures (note though, *not* Islam). Secondly, they maintained full-veils were obvious target of discrimination that emanates both from individuals and institutions in society. Thirdly, by wearing the full-veil, individuals drew, what respondents termed undue and unnecessary attention to themselves. In other words, it was counter-productive to the reasons of wearing veils in the first place, which was to ‘protect’ oneself from ‘unwanted looks’, as one of them put it. As alluded, because full-veils were viewed as something abnormal in the host society, those who wear full-veils in Sweden would attract more alienation (mostly negative).

It was the second account, *the veil and discrimination* that attracted more emphasis from the opponents of the full-veils among Somalis. These opponents asserted that all types of veils, not least full-veils, were obvious target for discrimination in society. Veils, as one of these respondents said, ‘activated’, deep seated prejudice against Muslims in society.

Indeed, as affirmed by several Somali women respondents, it was not uncommon for them to be asked whether they wanted to continue wearing their veils by employment exchange officers, instructors of courses they participated in (i.e., activation-, employability enhancement programmes, language courses, etc) and others in position of authority in similar settings which involves contacts with Swedish officials or institutions. Arguably, officials who have contacts with Somalis were only too aware of the difficulties veils presented to the latter's labour market integration in Sweden.

There were two examples in the labour market relations where the veil was an obstacle. The first occurs when an individual appears in a veil during an interview session. As pointed out, wearing a veil was all it took for employers not to consider the applicant for short listing in relation to the recruitment of workers. The decisive nature of the veil was reinforced by the conviction of few of these respondents who asserted that veils often took precedence over people's academic and professional qualification, as well as, previous work experience, when employers pondered over who to recruit. The second example cited when the veil became problematic was at workplaces, where those who wear veils could often face other discriminatory practices. For example, women with veil were likely to be shunned by fellow colleagues, denied chances in career development such as skill enhancement, training or promotions, etc.

8.5.2.2 The Full-Veil, a Generational Issue

It was unanimously endorsed by research respondents that second generation Somalis would not 'hold on to' veils with the same grip as their parents, hence, a phenomenon destined to fade over time. Accordingly, younger and subsequent Somali generations might have different outlook to many of the contemporary cultural and religious issues that face first generation Somalis. It has already been noted how Somali girls coming of age in Sweden, were beginning to 'flout' the way they related to the veil. The 'flouting' of the veil was not only seen as 'a sign of change', but one that was to be encouraged and admired in the eyes of some official respondents.

Nonetheless, young Somalis girls still had to walk a thin line between pleasing their parents (as well as the Somali community, in which part of their socialization occurs), and, becoming mindful of the Swedish way of life to which they were an integral part. Indeed, the way Somali girls dressed were often judged by both their peers – which included Swedish natives – , and their parents or significant other who would like them to adhere to the 'requirement' placed upon them culturally and religiously.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter looked at how ‘divergent’ culture and ‘religious’ practices by Somalis impacted upon their integration in Sweden. In respect to culture, the main ‘difference’ between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes stemmed largely from the intensity individuals attach to the role of the ‘family’ and other related socio-cultural structures (e.g., the clan as in the case of Somalis). Whilst Somalis emphasised ‘inter-dependence’, ‘native’ Swedes valued ‘independence’, ‘self-reliance’ and ‘individual autonomy’. For example, in terms of family bonds, the attachment of individuals to their families was less intense amongst ‘native’ Swedes than amongst Somalis. In the Somali community, on the other hand, there are intense networks of family/clan relationships which make it virtually impossible for an individual to turn away from family/clan or undertake an independent life. In other words, Somalis' first loyalty was not to the wider society but to their own clan. This was likely to give rise to tensions since Somalis were expected to behave like ‘responsible’ Swedish citizens, who were personally responsible for their actions/inactions and obligations to the wider society rather than clan.

With respect to religion, religiosity among Somalis in the backdrop of secular environment created friction with the mainstream society. Swedish secularism was potentially hostile to religion and religious symbols displayed in the public domain. When that religion appears to be Islam and the symbol, Muslim veils, that hostility becomes even exacerbated as a consequence. Coincidentally, the Somali community in Sweden happened to be a minority

where Islam was high in its social order. That in turn feeds into the broader divergence, incompatibility and differences between Somali immigrants and native Swedes.

From the standpoint of host society – as interpreted and relayed by some respondents –, Islam is a force that ‘pulls’ people towards the opposite and an ‘undesirable’ direction, from an integration viewpoint. It was an ‘ideology’ that excessively deviated from the values and beliefs of the host society, hence, its incongruence with prevailing dominant culture. It is fair to conclude, therefore, that unless Somalis realign themselves to Swedish secularism, they would continue to have problems in their endeavour to fully integrate into Swedish mainstream society.

CHAPTER NINE

9 GENDER ROLES/PATTERNS

This chapter identifies patriarchal gender relation patterns inherent in Somali culture as ‘problematic’ to the integration of Somalis in Sweden. Patriarchy here connotes a social condition in which women are dominated by men in society (see Alsop, *et al*, 2002; Bhobal, 1971; Eisentein, 1981; Whyte, 1978). In Whyte’s (1978) classic *Study of Women in Pre-industrial society*, this domination comes in various forms. It entails denying women the ownership or control of property, power within kinship and community contexts, domestic authority (including sharing decision-making with males), controls over women’s marital and sexual lives, the devaluation of women’s labour, and more generally, the lives of women in society, among others. Bhobal, (1997:1) sums up patriarchy as a condition that (a) inhibits the ‘access’ of women to socio-economic and political spheres of society, (b) outlines the manner of roles and ‘labour divisions within family and society takes form’, (c) and ‘prescribes’ the social expectations about the behaviour of women in society.

This chapter stipulates that patriarchy within the Somali community not only excessively deviates from the normative gender relations standards (i.e., the social expectations about the behaviour of women) in Sweden but it is also incompatible and challenging to the Swedish way of life. Nonetheless, this Chapter reveals that there is evidence to suggest that Somalis in Sweden have begun to ‘renegotiate’ the patriarchy inherent in their culture, thanks largely to

influences from a proactive social welfare system (that promotes gender equality through its diverse policy initiatives) and a society (i.e., Swedish) with different normative practices, expectations and attitudes with regards to gender issues.

The chapter further contends that this ‘renegotiation’ amounts not only to a re-think of the traditional Somali gender patriarchal patterns, but it is also one that causes a great deal of consternation to Somali families in particular, and the Somali community in Sweden, at large. As a caveat though, it is important to register that this ‘renegotiation’ is happening at a very slow pace. Moreover, there is little to suggest that the host society and its institutions, including policy makers and law makers, especially, in the sphere of immigrant integration have yet to take notice of this development. One probable reason is linked to the levels of Swedish gender equality whose threshold was regarded by the overwhelming majority of respondents as *very high*, especially, in comparison to many countries, and more so, to the *world* in which Somalis operate.

9.1 The *A priori* assumptions

There were number of *a priori* assumption with regards to the embeddedness of patriarchy among Somalis in Sweden. First, Somalis were highly gendered, i.e., men and women were ‘allocated’ separate roles within the household, the family and society in general. Second, the normative practices and expectations pertaining to gender relations among Somalis, *demande*

women to be subservient to their families, husbands and other male relatives. Third, as a traditional constellation, patriarchy hugely disfavoured Somali women.

In contrast, it was assumed that, patriarchal patterns akin to Somalis were rare and also considered atypical in the Swedish context. That did not, however, imply that patriarchy did not exist in Sweden. On the contrary, patriarchy exists in all societies, including Sweden, and has done so since time immemorial. Nonetheless, what matters, arguably, is the degree to which a given society commits itself to changing the structures and conditions that sustain patriarchy. It is the researcher's contention that Sweden can be regarded as being among the few nations, if not the most successful, in terms of demolishing many of those structures and conditions that habitually sustain patriarchy in society.

Given the above context, one could ask, can Somalis align their patriarchal gender patterns and behavior to prevailing Swedish norms (on gender relations)? To answer this question one has to look into the interrelated aspects of '*gender equality*', '*gender roles*' and, '*inter-personal relationships pertaining to the courting processes*'. Indeed, it was possible, analytically, to make a relationship between these three themes. It was possible to argue, for example, that for Somalis to renegotiate their traditional Somali patriarchal patterns and relations, and, to subsequently attain relative *gender equality*, they had to modify the way they (men and women) shared or divided *roles* and responsibilities within the household, as well as children, among themselves. Moreover, to attain relative *gender equality*, modification in the *inter-*

personal relationships in the context of courting was necessary. For Somali women that meant attaining a relative degree of personal freedom in the way they chose their partners without recourse, approval or interference by male overseers and ‘families’. These modifications were necessary not only for Somalis to attain a greater degree of equality among themselves but were also crucial in the way they [Somalis] related to, and were perceived by, others in the wider Swedish society, not least when it came to their [Somali’s] integration into society.

9.2 Patriarchy amongst Somalis – A Contextual Understanding

Many respondents had identified gender equality as an important element in Swedish cultural identity (cf. Björnberg, 2002, Sörensen & Bergqvist, 2002). Accordingly, it was argued, for Somalis to integrate into mainstream Swedish society, they had to align their normative gender practices, behaviour and expectations to the prevailing Swedish norms and values on gender matters. That requires the attaining of, what many respondents endorsed as, ‘fairer’, more equal gender roles by and among Somalis, particularly, in the household. It also required the attainment of personal freedoms and liberties by Somali women, both in terms, of socio-economic independence (i.e., the ‘relief’ from male breadwinners and the family) and the ability for Somali women to make own decisions and choices with regards to their potential partners (i.e., without recourse to family or male minders).

However, ‘gender equality’, gender roles, and the discretion to choose potential spouses (by Somali women) are issues that are culturally and contextually located. They cannot, therefore, be fully understood, without looking into the contexts in which they flourished or came into being in the first place. In other words, in order to understand the *present*, (i.e., issues relating to gender relations as well as patriarchy among Somalis in Sweden), one has to delve into the *past*, (i.e., the patriarchal patterns or conditions that Somalis were familiar with prior to their arrival in Sweden).

9.2.1 Gender Roles and Division of Labour

Somalis come from a patriarchal society that was highly gendered. By gendered, we mean ‘differences’ between men and women that were ‘socially and culturally constructed’, as opposed to ‘biological’ differences (Dean, 2007:212; see Harré, 1998). Whether at home or in civil service, commerce, animal husbandry, farming, etc, women and men in Somalia were assigned different roles and were expected to behave differently. Gender roles and division of labour among Somalis were not only explicit but they were also taken for granted.

Broadly, the man was the ‘father’, the ‘husband’, the ‘head of the family’, the ‘breadwinner’, the ‘sole decision maker’, the ‘initiator’ or ‘active creature’ in social relations, family and society. As a breadwinner, the man was bestowed with power (including dominance) and prestige that flowed from his status. His was ‘respected’ and his standing and authority was

central to the family. As often described, it was he who ‘went out of the house at dawn to fend for the whole family and returned with the bounty at dusk’. The roles to feed and clothe members of the family were not limited to his nuclear family but to his entire kith and kin.

Contrastingly, the woman was the ‘mother’, the ‘wife’, the ‘head of the household’, the ‘bearer’ and ‘rearer’ of children, the ‘obedient servant’, the ‘passive entity’ or ‘receiver’ in social relations, in the family and society. The *woman* was often talked of as the *mother*. Statements such as: “The *mother* was responsible for looking after the children”, or the “the *mother* was responsible for the house”, showed that the power women wielded in Somali society was confined only to their homes (i.e., the private sphere), and not ‘out there’ which was construed to mean the public (as opposed to the private) domain.

Moreover, the inferior position of Somali women vis-à-vis their male counterparts ensured that they [women] were entirely excluded from leadership and decision-making roles both in the family and in the community at large. In the family it was the man who took the role as head of the family. In the community, women were automatically excluded from the council of elders, the traditional governing authority charged with making decision on behalf of the community, as well as, the mediation of disputes among Somalis (both in the family and community). In this context, the Somali adage *women have no beards* summed it all, entailing women were not wise enough to be bestowed with serious tasks that affected the overall affairs of the community.

9.2.2 Patriarchy: part of the socialisation process

Patriarchy among Somalis was part of the socialisation process and started early in life. Boys and girls were groomed accordingly: boys as future breadwinners and girls were prepared to serve those boys as obedient wives and ‘good’ mothers for their children. Moreover, respective gender roles (and tasks) were not only assigned to boys and girls at a tender age but were also expected to behave differently in ways that mirrored gender differentiation in adulthood.

There were two recurrent examples in the way these differentiations played themselves out to reflect on the roles and expectations from children as they grew up. One example was how girls were assigned tasks in the house in order to help and learn from their mothers (or other female relatives) whilst boys often accompanied their fathers (or other male relatives) to the ‘outside’ to help and learn from the latter.

The other examples highlight how girls and boys played or were allowed to play, depicting not only how different roles were inculcated upon girls and boys from the very early childhood but also how social controls curtailed the freedoms of girls and how the ‘lack of’ social control ‘enhanced’ those of boys. One example in which this manifested itself was in play situations. Whilst girls were denied spontaneity to be curious or play freely as they grew progressively, boys were, on the other hand, given more or less a ‘free hand to do pretty much what they

wanted’, to use the paraphrase of one Somali female respondent. Somali boys were, as other respondents put it, accorded considerable freedoms to ‘play and dare’ and to ‘stretch to their limits until told otherwise’. After all, boys were expected to be ““men”, brave, strong and in control of situations in the face of adversity’, as another added. The latter sentiment links to Somali nomadic pastoral lifestyle which expected men to operate in harsh environmental conditions.

As reinforced by many respondents, girls were often ‘reminded or ‘commanded’ by their parents, relatives and ‘even visitor’ to: ‘Sit like a girl!’, ‘Stop jumping like a boy!’, ‘You are a girl!’, ‘You are a woman!’, ‘You are not a boy’, and so and so forth. All these constrictions visited upon girls were intended (consciously or unconsciously) to underpin the notion that girls were, indeed, different and had or would have different ‘roles’ to those of their male counterparts in society. It also confirms girls faced a rather stringent monitoring regime whilst boys seemed to have little in comparison.

9.2.3 Patriarchy Sustained

Patriarchy among Somalis meant boys grew up to expect and become self-sufficient. Girls, on the other hand, were socialised to depend on their families, and eventually on their [potential] husbands for nearly all aspects of their needs, personal, social, economic, etc. Three reasons were overwhelming endorsed by the majority of Somali respondents as having ‘traditionally’

contributed to the sustenance and perpetuation of patriarchy among Somalis. These included, ‘unfair resource allocation’ (within the family) which pitied girls against boys; ‘early marriages’; and, ‘child-bearing and rearing roles’. All these factors seemed to suggest that patriarchy sealed the fate of many Somali women from a relatively early age.

9.2.3.1 Resource Allocation

As alluded to previously, patriarchy favoured Somali men over Somali women. It gave men power, domination and access to material resources both in the family and the community, whilst denying women the same opportunities. To illustrate this, when it came to resource allocation within the family, the reasons were twofold. First, resources in many families in Somalia were meagre, which meant priorities over who has to benefit (among the children) had to be made. Second, girls were married off early, which implied they had ‘stakes’ in their future matrimonial relationships, hence, the logic for denying girls resources in the family.

Indeed, given the meagreness of resources for most Somali families, all children could not benefit from resource allocation. Those left out happened, often, to be girls. Nowhere was this more clearly illustrated than in the case of children’s education where families were more likely to pay school fees for boys than girls – and as a consequence, where boys were more likely than girls to go to school, and certainly, to higher education in Somalia. Below are some of the sentiments that reinforce the above.

ABarni, a 36 year old female respondent:

The discretion of where to put family resources rested on my parents. Whilst our brothers, were encouraged and supported to realise their full potentials, less could be said of us as sisters. Unfortunately, this was not a phenomenon limited only to my own family but a practice replicated in the majority of families across Somalia.

Hanan, a 42 year old male respondent relayed his own experience:

Take my own family comprising of four boys and three girls, as an example. Resources in the family were, indeed, geared towards the advancement of boys rather than the girls in relation to education. As a result, all my three elder brothers ended up studying at university whilst I obtained my degree from abroad. None of my three sisters, by contrast, had attended university. The highest two of them attained was only secondary education.

The second reason was culturally specific and was linked to the assumption that girls were more likely to get married early and become ‘part of another family’ (i.e., potential husband’s family). This implied that girls had lesser stakes in their paternal families than their brothers since the latter ‘stuck with’ their paternal families ‘for life’, as one respondent put it. Indeed, the expectation was that girls would sooner or later leave their paternal families and become ‘members’ of their future husbands’ families. Their offspring would carry the name of their husband’s family. In contrast, boys always ‘stayed’ with their paternal families, carried the name of their fathers and families; inherited and took responsibilities for the ‘wellbeing’ of their own families, not ‘other families’ as girls purportedly did.

9.2.3.2 Early Marriages

Early marriages are part of the reason for the perpetuation of the inferior position of women in relation to their male counter-parts in Somalia. Indeed, it was not uncommon for Somali girls to ‘finish’ their education after puberty for marital purposes. Once these youngsters entered marriage, there was little opportunity for them to continue education later in adult life. One reason for this is that adult education system in Somalia was very limited in scope (see Abdi, 1998). For another, adult education was often geared towards the eradication of illiteracy rather than for the purpose of pursuing comprehensive or further education, as in the developed world. Besides, once married, young women became engaged, more and more, with their families and children, in their roles as mothers and wives – a situation they would find hard to extract themselves from to pursue education.

9.2.3.3 Child-bearing and rearing roles

For Somalis having many children was considered not only a source of prestige but also as a potential source of labour (within the family). This was particularly the case for nomadic families who tended livestock (e.g., camel, cattle, goats and sheep). Often, the practical and immediate need for labour within these families was so pressing that having more children became the rational, long-term, option to offset the acute labour shortages they faced. It should be noted that, with pastoral families, child labour began as early as the age of five with tasks assigned to children increasing successively as they grew older. Besides, polygamy,

commonly practiced in Somalia, made it possible for Somalis to have more children in a rather short period.

The role of bearing and rearing many children thus adversely affected the position (and rights) of women in the family/society vis-à-vis their male counterparts. It ensured that women become constantly engaged in these tasks rather than their 'own personal' development in order to improve their position in society contrary to those of their male counterparts.

9.3 'Renegotiating' Patriarchy in Sweden

Having looked at the context under which patriarchy applied in pre-migration condition for Somalis in Sweden, we now turn our attention to Sweden, where Somalis are slowly attempting to 'renegotiate' the terms of patriarchy under a new sets of conditions. Two overarching factors were endorsed by the overwhelming majority of Somali respondents, as having facilitated the 'renegotiations' of patriarchy inherent in Somali culture in Sweden. The first was a proactive welfare state which was regarded as being 'favourable' to women, including their issues, concerns, courses and conditions, among others. The second was attributed to a 'new setting' (i.e., Sweden) and a society (Swedish) that lived by different normative standards, behaviour and practices from those Somalis were familiar with as pertains to gender patterns and relations. This sub-section explores these two factors in more details.

9.3.1 A Socially ‘Proactive’ Welfare State

The role of the Swedish Welfare State in undermining traditional Somali patriarchal tendencies was viewed as major. Among the widely held conception among respondents was that the Swedish Welfare State had displaced the ‘traditional’ roles of Somali men as breadwinners. Another widely held conviction was that the welfare state had influenced traditional gender roles and the domestic divisions of labour. Both these two factors were tied to the notion that Somali women no longer needed to be economically dependent upon Somali men (i.e., male partners or husbands). That independence has also changed the dynamics of power relationships in the household where Somali men are now ‘compelled’ to participate to some extent.

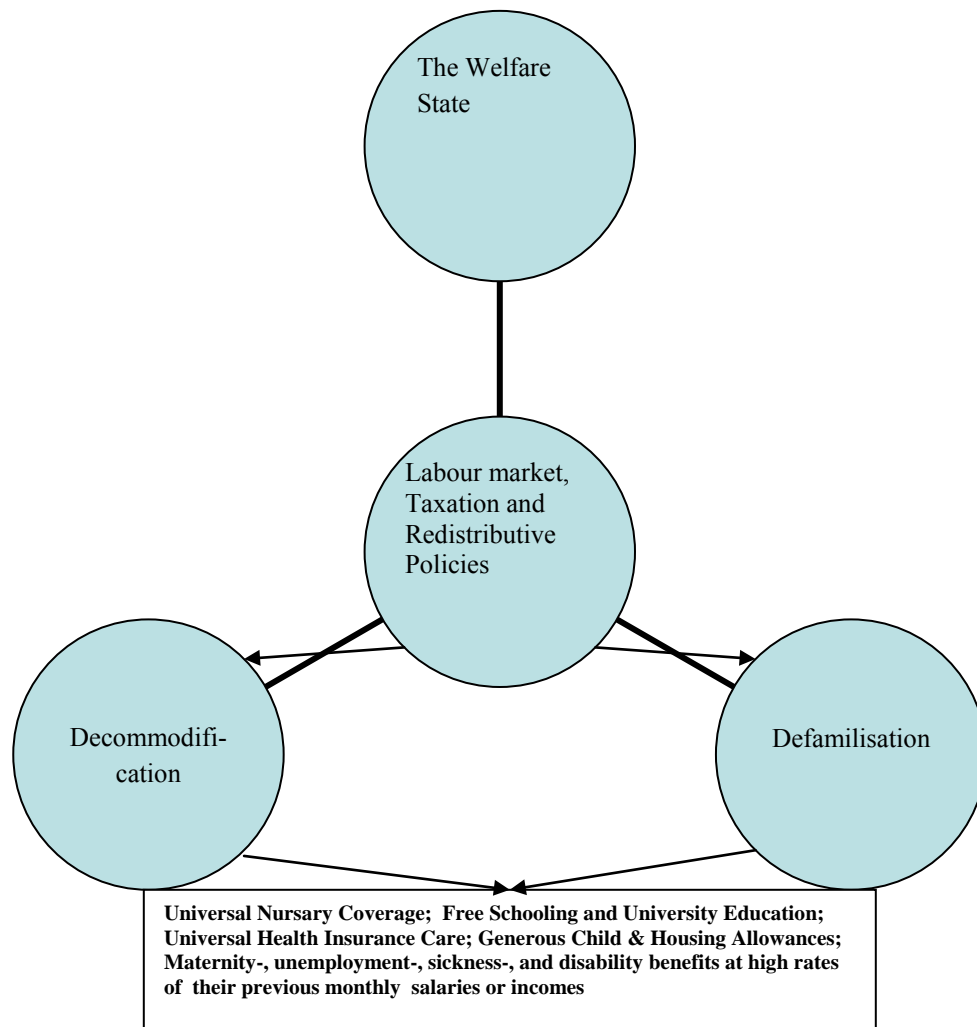
9.3.1.1 Displacement of the Bread-winner Status

Although the respondents have not used academic or social policy terms, what they were explaining related to concepts widely employed in comparative Social Welfare discussions, such as, ‘decommodification’, and ‘defamilisation’ as the prime goals of the Swedish Welfare State labour market, taxation and redistributive policies. ‘Decommodification’ entails a process where the State intervenes to ensure that citizens ‘maintained a livelihood without reliance on the market’ (Esping-Andersen, 1990:21-2). The provision of free universal coverage in education, health care, generous child and housing benefits, on one hand, and the provision of generous maternity-, unemployment-, sickness-, and disability benefits (as high as 80% of

previous earnings for a considerable amount of time in Sweden), on the other, all ensure that individuals attain considerable independence from the market (see Ginsburg, 2001:199-200; 213-216).

‘De-familisation’, on the other hand, is a process that ensures welfare state provisions lessen the reliance of individuals (including women) on their families, e.g., male breadwinners (Finch & Masin, 1993; Finch, 1989). It is important to note that de-familisation is partly necessitated by the changing nature of family structures and obligation in postmodern societies like Sweden, where it is, for example, self-evident for women to educate themselves and participate to a the labour market, to a greater extent (see Dean, 2007). Figure 9.1 shows a schematic representation of how the above two processes (‘decommodification’ and ‘defamilisation’) is achieved.

Figure 9.1: A Schematic Representation of how Decommodification and De-familisation are achieved by the Welfare State.



Source: Developed as part of this Study.

Nonetheless, it is important to point out that Somali women are poorly represented in the Swedish labour force. Many would not, therefore, benefit directly, from most of those welfare provisions that are income related. However, many of them would still be eligible for other benefits intended to assist the less well-off (often marginalised) members of society such as

social assistance, housing allowances and child benefit. These benefits still allow many Somali women to live a relatively independent life without recourse to a male breadwinner and the family, if they opted to do so.

9.3.1.2 Domestic Division of Labour

The roles of Somali men in relation to domestic divisions of labour have also come under increasing challenge in Sweden. Somali men were, for example, expected or ‘compelled’ (as some respondents put it) to take greater responsibility for minding children and household chores (e.g., cooking, dishwashing, laundering, cleaning, etc). Ironically, some Somali male respondents felt these ‘changes’ amounted to roles now becoming ‘inverse’ – with men taking over ‘women’s jobs’, and women acquiring ‘men’s jobs’.

Traditionally, the involvement of Somali men in household chores was a cultural taboo, hence, a practice few of them contemplated engaging in, prior to their arrival in Sweden. As illustrated by a number of Somali respondents, household chores by men was ‘culturally unheard of’, or, ‘unworthy of men doing’, to use some of their phrases. The ‘few instance’ where Somali respondents thought men could engage in household chores was when or where they [men] were compelled to do so by circumstance. An example of the one of these ‘few instances’ was where single men lived in faraway places and had no means of finding servants

or maids to employ. Even under such circumstances, it was stressed Somali men preferred to eat in restaurants rather than cook their own food.

Performing household chores – because it was a taboo – was also stigmatising. Indeed, the man who performed *women tasks* (such as cooking, cleaning, laundering, etc) was called a *qorqod* – a derogatory term that associated the man with ‘women work’ among Somalis. Paradoxically, Somali women were vehemently opposed to the idea of their male relatives (fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, etc) getting involved in household chores precisely because of the stigma involved. As one Somali female respondent put it, no Somali woman wanted to be related or associated with a *Qorqod*.

Another new aspect for Somali men in Sweden vis-à-vis their relative changing gender roles regarded their roles and responsibilities for their children. As argued previously, Somali men were increasingly taking turns in minding children, and took sole charge for them when women (wives) were ‘out’ working or attending courses (language courses, activation programmes, etc). Among the recurrent child care tasks Somali men engaged in were, feeding of children, changing nappies, dropping and picking up children at nurseries and schools, taking children to different activities, e.g., football, swimming, etc.

The increasing participation of Somali men in household chores and taking a greater role in children's lives divided opinion, among Somali male respondents. Some saw this new development as something positive and beneficial for the whole family, especially, in situations where the extended families that played a helping hand with housework, child care, etc, were no longer available in the new environment. Nevertheless, there were others who said they were 'forced' or 'compelled' to engage in households due to the prevailing circumstance.

Not surprising, there was a unanimity in the verdict of Somali women respondents concerning the 'new' roles Somali men in Sweden were now embracing (willingly or unwillingly) –, i.e., by taking greater responsibility in sharing household chores and in the affairs of children. According to these women, this new development was not only positive but something that was long overdue.

9.3.2 A New Setting: A New society

Sweden as a new environment was also unanimously endorsed by Somali respondents as having had a catalytic role in the 'renegotiation' of gender roles among Somalis. Indeed, for Somalis, Sweden not only had different normative behaviours and expectation regarding gender relations, but also was one of the least gendered, if not *the* least gendered society in the world. As scholars such as Wängnerud, & Sundell (2010:9) confirm, 'Sweden is regularly

singled out as among the most women-friendly in the world’ and comes on ‘top of lists ranking countries according to gender equality’. This resonates with Williams (2008:1), who argues these ‘women friendly policies are both a source of envy and an exemplar we can present to our own [UK] policy-makers’.

Accordingly, two impressions seemed to strike Somali research respondents vis-à-vis Sweden. The first related to the inculcation of gender equality into Swedish children and the simultaneous ‘conscious’ erasure of patriarchy from their ‘psyche’, at the very early tender age. The second observation related to the ‘visibility’ of Swedish women in the public domain as a manifestation of how Sweden has gone furthest, internationally, with regard to gender equality and gender relations, in general.

9.3.2.1 The Inculcation of Gender Equality into Children

Gender equality among Swedes was regarded as part of the Swedish socialisation process. It was argued, for example, that Swedes inculcated the values of gender equality into their children earlier on in life (note how gender differentiation among Somalis also becomes cemented from early childhood). Moreover, both girls and boys in Sweden were encouraged and groomed in such a way that they become independent from the families (whereas Somali girls/women became culturally bound to their family and male relatives).

To illustrate the above patterns, a glance at the Swedish preschool curriculum highlights how attempts were made to implant the notion of a fairer, more gender equal society into Swedish children earlier on in their childhood. Indeed, one of the stated goals of Swedish preschool curriculum is to counteract traditional gender roles and patterns in society. Arguably, given that pre-schooling (*Forskola*) in Sweden has an ‘important role as one of the actors of socialisation in society’; and, given that ‘77% of children between 1-5 years old in Sweden are registered as pre-school-attendees’ (Ärlemalm-Hagsér & Pramling Samuelsson, 2009:89), there is an ample reason to believe that patriarchy has lessened in Sweden in comparison to many countries or societies in the world, as a consequence. Moreover, the same values are imparted by parents to children at home – an even greater reason why Swedes take the value of gender equality for ‘granted’.

9.3.2.2 Visibility of Women

The issue of ‘visibility’ of Swedish women in the public domain was something that struck many Somali research respondents as impressive. It was a widely held convention among respondents, for example, that women constituted not only a large proportion of street-level-bureaucrats in Sweden but that they also wielded ‘immense power’ in society. As observed, most of the respondents had contacts with the public sector (as clients, students, employees, etc), where women predominate, hence, their impressions they formed was borne out of their experiences.

A general proposition adapted by respondents was that the ‘visibility’ of Swedish women in society was directly correlated to their economic participation in society. As alluded to previously, the more women participated in the economic life of a country, the more ‘visible’, more equal women and men became. This in turn had the propensity to mitigate or do away with patriarchal patterns in society.

As inferred by a number of respondents, the above proposition seemed applicable to the Swedish case, where women, traditionally, had a high economic participation rates, in comparison to many countries in the world. Indeed, Statistics on economic participation rates for Swedish women seems to justify the above assertion. Within Sweden, for example, Swedish women seem to have outperformed their male counterparts in higher education. As Table 9.1 shows, in 2007, 49% of Swedish women aged 25-44 had undergone higher education in comparison to 38% men in the same age-group. Between the ages of 45–64, 35% of women had higher education compared to 30% of their male counterparts in the same age-group. When it comes to participation rates in overall economic activities (which includes full-time students), the percentage is 90% for women compared to 95% for men in the age-group, 25–44 years (Table 9.2). For those in age-group 45–64 years, the percentage is 81% for women as compared to 85% men.

Table 9.1 Level of education in age groups 25–44 and 45–64 by region of birth, in 2007.

Percentage distribution

25–44 years	Level of education								Total	
Region of birth	Compul- sory.		Upper Secondary		Higher Education		No info.			
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
Sweden	6	9	45	52	49	38	0	0	100	100
Nordic countries except Sweden	10	13	45	50	42	34	2	3	100	100
Europe except Nordic countries	17	18	36	42	44	37	3	3	100	100
Asia	24	24	34	37	40	38	2	2	100	100
Others	18	13	43	41	37	43	2	3	100	100
Total	8	10	44	51	47	38	1	1	100	100

Percentage distribution

45–64 years	Level of education								Total	
	Region of birth									
	Compul- sory.		Upper Secondary		Higher Education		No info.			
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
Sweden	17	24	48	46	35	30	0	0	100	100
Nordic countries except Sweden	27	34	44	44	29	20	1	2	100	100
Europe except Nordic countries	27	19	39	47	32	32	2	2	100	100
Asia	34	19	30	38	29	40	7	3	100	100
Others	21	20	36	37	39	41	3	2	100	100
Total	19	24	46	45	34	30	1	1	100	100

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Sweden (2008)

Table 9.2 Economic activity rate by region of birth and age 2007

Region of birth	25–44 years		45–64 years	
	W	M	W	M
Sweden	90	95	81	85
Nordic countries except Sweden	87	94	70	75
Europe except Nordic countries	78	91	62	73
Asia	67	84	57	72
Others	78	89	74	81
Total	87	94	78	84

NB: The above table includes the relative labour force figure for persons who are full-time students and who have looked for work or have been able to work. This is in accordance with the new definition for unemployment that applies from October 2007 onwards.

Source: Labour Force Surveys, Statistics Sweden (2008)

9.3.2.3 Gender Equality in Sweden: The Impact on Somali Women'

Somali women see how women in Sweden compete on the same level playing field as men. Somali women also see how women in Sweden are participating in society, with some of them taking up leading positions in government, commerce and academia, among other. They are also discovering the many opportunities and advantages available for them in Sweden which was denied to them in Somalia. They know, if all things remain equal, that girls in Sweden could fully achieve their potential, if they make the necessary efforts.

Thus, by reflecting upon the new setting and the circumstances for women in Sweden, Somali women look at their own position and may realise that they are, or were, being held back by obstacles embedded in the social structures of their [Somali] community – a social structure that provided them with fewer opportunities, saw them married off early in life without their consent, reduced their roles to that of mothers and wives, and so on. Moreover, Somali women were subject to elaborate social control as they were collectively bounded to the families, extended families as well as to relations within the clan system.

9.4 Further Outcomes

The combined catalytic roles of the ‘proactive’ Swedish welfare state and Swedish society have led to a number of outcomes that have undermined Somali patriarchal patterns in Sweden. The following outcomes were frequently cited by respondents to that effect: the virtue of ‘relative independence’ of Somali women; the greater propensity of spousal conflict (especially, where ‘rigid’ patriarchal relations remained ‘unmodified’); and, the weakening influence of social control by Somali families. In many ways, the perceived attainment of relative independence by Somali women was viewed as a precursor to both familial discord (and eventual breakdown), and the weakening of social control among Somalis in Sweden (see below).

9.4.1 Relative Independence

Many respondents reported that Somali women have gained more relative independence in Sweden, when compared to women in Somalia, especially, in matters pertaining to their own personal, social and economic (financial) affairs. Moreover, Somali women were said to make decisions on these matters without recourse, reference or approval from their family or male overseers (e.g., brothers, husbands, etc), as would have been the case in Somalia. As alluded to previously, ‘independence’ provided women with the leverage they needed to decide for themselves, set their own demands, have more ‘rights’ and say in spousal relationships, and for those ‘courting’, a say in who to have a relationship with.

A number of Somali male respondents saw this new phenomenon of relative independence gained by Somali women in Sweden in a negative light. Many of these respondents argued that 'independence' by Somali women was detrimental not only to 'them', as men, but also to Somali families (particularly, to children), as well as, to the Somali community more generally in Sweden. Indeed, such 'independence' was largely viewed as a recipe for 'more' marital conflicts or marital discords among Somalis in Sweden, since it challenged the rights of men to act as head of their families. The linkage between 'independence' by women, challenges to the dominance of men over women and the perceived inevitability of familial discord as a consequence, was summed up in the sentiment of one respondent who stated: "one cannot have two heads in the same household".

When it came to the family, 'independence' by women was regarded as detrimental for two main reasons. First, it was seen as 'something' that was 'not good' for children and their upbringing. The insinuation among some male respondents was that a 'good' mother was 'always' 'obedient' or 'loyal' to her husband and family. Another issue was that, children who belonged to women who 'displayed' greater degree of 'independence' (from their husbands and families) were likely to have emotional and behavioural problems, since such 'independence' resulted from deficits in the cultural and religious identity of these women.

With respect to, ‘independence’ being detrimental to the Somali society in Sweden, some male respondents argued it undermined the authority of men and the family – two important entities in Somali culture. ‘Independence’ by women was simply ‘un-Somali’, for those who espoused this assertion. Women were after all, it was argued, supposed to be subordinate to their husbands and families. Others opposed greater ‘independence’ by women on the ground that it was tantamount to ‘losing their [Somali] culture’. These respondents linked ‘independence’ by women to a possible increase in intermarriage between Somalis and non-Somalis. Intermarriage, they argued, was a ‘threat’ to the Somali way of life and Islam, and hence, their opposition.

Naturally, many women respondents (and even some of their Somali male counterparts) did not share the views of those who expressed opposition to the relative ‘independence’ gained by Somali women in Sweden. They vehemently argued that ‘independence’ by women was an inevitable consequence of the new realities Somalis in Sweden find themselves in. There were, they argued, a whole new set of demands on Somalis in Sweden that rendered the old patriarchal patterns obsolete. For them, the sooner Somali men appreciated this ‘new’ prospect, the better.

Nonetheless, a number of Somali women respondents said they understood why Somali men ‘feel begrudged’ in Sweden, to use the phrase of one of them. To these women, Somali men espoused a sense of resentment for the ‘new order’ since their situation in Sweden was

aggravated by the lack of sympathy and appreciation from ‘many quarters’, alluding to the wider Swedish society, the establishment, and the media – as entities hostile to the old patterns with which Somali men were accustomed to. Also cited was the loss of status (e.g., as breadwinner) and widespread unemployment as factors that compounded the predicament of Somali men in Sweden.

9.4.2 The Propensity for Conflict

The propensity for spousal conflict among Somalis was seen by many respondents as an inevitable consequence of the new realities facing Somalis in Sweden. It was argued, such conflicts were more acute among couples where rigid patriarchal relations existed. The causes of spousal conflicts among Somalis were multifaceted. Among the most recurrent sources of disputes cited included, (a) ‘rigidity on the part of men’, (b) ‘frustrations by men’, (c) ‘the lack of a “family” ethos in Sweden, and (d) ‘involvement by the authorities’ (in mediating conflicts).

9.4.2.1 Rigidity on the Part of Men

Many female respondents attributed the ‘rigidity’ on the part of men, in the wake of the new circumstances, as the cause of marital disputes among Somalis in Sweden. They argued such ‘rigidity’ presented challenges for ‘holding families together’. ‘Rigidity’ connoted the practice

of living by Somali unmodified normative gender behaviours and expectation, which was seen by many as a recipe for marital conflict.

Indeed, the need for moderating the rigid patriarchal patterns within Somali culture in Sweden was unanimously endorsed as a predictable outcome, especially, where Somali men failed to adjust to the new realities. Accordingly, the need for flexibility and compromise between Somali spouses was stressed as the means to maintain their relationships in Sweden. This need was necessitated by the fact that the *old gender patterns* (e.g., roles, relations, etc) as lived and practiced in Somalia would not, and cannot, work in Sweden, hence, the need for moderation. Helping or sharing responsibility in household chores and in child care with their female counterparts, were seen as good examples of modifying patriarchal patterns.

The need for flexibility was reflective in the sentiments of Muktar, a 44 year old male respondent who used the word ‘stone’ as a metaphor for ‘inflexibility’ and wondered where that led, referring to subsequent breakdowns in spousal relationships. According to Muktar:

We cannot continue with the same old mindset back home. If you become a stone, she becomes a stone. You can predict the consequence for yourself.

Ahmed, a 42 year old male respondent believed the inability of men to get in tune with the new realities in Sweden ‘took them nowhere’. For Ahmed:

The man who demands his warm food on the table, his bed kept neat and regular, yet does not reciprocate by receiving his own family and children with warmth and compassion cannot expect his homestead to survive or be without tension.

Mariam, a 30 year old female respondent was more forthcoming in her assertion:

Somali men cannot dictate their terms. They have to engage and compromise with their spouses. The 'one-man show' affairs are over.

Anab, a 33 year old female respondent took a more consolatory tone:

For the sake of keeping the family together, men have to consult with your partner.

As noted above, the discussions relating to the 'rigidity' and 'inflexibility' on the part of Somali men was juxtaposed against a backdrop of new realities, i.e., living in Sweden. As alluded to, there were different sets of practical demands in this new setting which rendered the 'old' patriarchal patterns familiar to Somalis 'unworkable' in Sweden. One recurrent example cited of the practical demands was related to Swedish labour enforcement policy which requires citizens to become economically active (i.e., through participation in education, activation programmes, work, etc). In particular, Swedish labour enforcement policy ties benefits (means tested or otherwise) to citizens' economic activities. Moreover, the relative success, efficacy and implementation of Swedish labour enforcement policy were

attributed to Swedish universal nursery coverage which was widely accessible to those who needed child-care places for their children. Furthermore, child-care in Sweden was not a matter of affordability. People who cannot afford child-care (e.g., people on benefits) are assisted by their local municipalities in accordance with the Swedish Social Services Act (*Socialtjänstlagen*).

Accordingly, both women and men would need to complement each other in light of the demands and conditions the new setting of Sweden entailed for Somalis. As summed up by Isir, a 32 year old female respondent:

It is impossible for a woman to be out or attending courses all day... mind the children and do all house-hold work by herself while the man does nothing.

9.4.2.2 Frustrations Expressed by Men

The relative loss of power, status, prestige and worthiness by Somali men in Sweden was viewed to have a contributory effect on marital conflicts among Somali spouses. Patriarchy had provided Somali men with virtues such as power, prestige, the need and means to control and dominate women, etc. These virtues also 'differentiated' men from women. Suddenly, Somali men have become 'invisible' in Sweden. Many had lost their bread-winner status. Many remain largely unemployed and rely (together with their family) on handouts from the municipality and state. Indeed, 'powerlessness', 'idleness', 'rolelessness', and 'worthlessness'

were some of the adjectives associated with the new predicament of Somali men in Sweden. Many of these traits directly stemmed from their unfavourable labour market situations in Sweden (for more on this, refer to Chapter Five).

‘Idleness’ and ‘rolelessness’ were terms that were sometimes used as a substitute for ‘unemployment’ among Somali men. These terms had, however, another connotation in relation to spousal conflicts. The ‘idle’, as it were, had more time for themselves, and by implication, ‘more time for conflict’ between or among themselves. Jelle, a 53 year old male respondent had this to say:

Couples confined to the four squares of their living rooms for hours on end, may have an intensive contact with one another, which in itself is not a bad thing. But unfortunately, as is often the case, these parties have no other outlets to vent their frustrations or anger when things do not work out between them-selves except on themselves.

Irshad, a 41 year old male respondent, adds:

In a scenario where people sit idly facing each other, all the time... where the intensity of contact becomes disadvantageous rather than the opposite, minor disputes often get magnified.

Hanan, 42, seemed to suggest some causality by linking unemployment among Somali men to their [men’s] frustrations:

Because men feel frustrated, there were more likely to have mood-swings ... and, they are more likely to act out on their partners and the family.

As alluded to, all these factors, unemployment, the loss of power, prestige, the loss of breadwinner status, etc, compounded to make Somali men feel less worthy in the new setting in relation to their positions before their arrival in Sweden. These factors, by implication, also generated a great source of anger and frustrations among Somali men – anger that was likely to cause marital conflicts between Somalis spouses.

9.4.2.3 The Lack of ‘Family’

The lack of ‘family’ in Sweden was endorsed as a source of marital conflicts among Somalis in Sweden. For Somalis, the term ‘family’ carried wider connotation since it often encompassed not only the nuclear family but also the extended family, the sub-sub-clan, sub-clan and even the clan. However, for the purpose of this discussion, the researcher limits the term ‘family’ to the ‘extended family’ since it was more known to individuals and also served as the traditional ‘overseer’ of the nuclear family.

In Somalia, the ‘family’ had specific functions that bolster married couples (the nuclear family). Among the most cited examples included, *emotional support, sharing responsibilities*

with the couple and conflict resolution with regards to spousal/marital disputes. Let us explore these in more detail.

9.4.2.3.1 Emotional support

In Somalia, the ‘family’ was a place in which there was a rich and varied source of networks and support. The ‘family’ was an *outlet* for couples to express their concerns. It provided ‘protection’ against the kind of isolation and loneliness Somalis said they experienced in Sweden. However, because the ‘family’ was often not physically ‘present’ in Sweden – since Somalis mainly immigrated into Sweden as individuals – its functions to provide ‘outlets’ for couples to express emotions and shield them from isolation were severely curtailed. Moreover, even where some Somalis had ‘families’ in Sweden, the roles of the ‘family’ as a place for emotional support was also significantly reduced. This was because Sweden presented a different set of circumstances for Somali ‘families’ to which they had to adjust accordingly. As one respondent quipped, ‘everyone in Sweden is tied-up.... no one has time for the other’.

Furthermore, isolation and loneliness were viewed as part of the *new* experiences for Somalis in Sweden. Some of this isolation was a consequence of living in Sweden. After all, Sweden is a society where the intensity of bonds between people as individuals is less intensive compared to what Somalis are used to under their clan-system. Indeed, Sweden was often depicted, rightly or wrongly, as the *typical* individualistic society where, ‘neighbours and even

friends, closed their doors’, or ‘where you had to notify the individual before you paid a visit’, to use one of the sentiments by a Somali respondent, in their attempt to describe how isolation had become ‘normalised’ even for Somalis in Sweden. This scenario was contrasted to their lives and experiences in Somalia, where ‘no one felt boxed-in’, to use the phrase of another research respondent.

As alluded to by a number of respondents, there were two reasons why bounds were less constraining for individuals in Somalia in comparison to life in Sweden. First, Somali culture is based on nomadic pastoralism where land, particularly grazing land, is communally owned. Second, the Somali clan system does inculcate collectivist values and outlook of the world, hence, renders individualism redundant and ‘unnatural’. It also provides Somalis with expanded and varied networks of contacts to which they can draw, among other things, emotional, social, and economic support. These two factors prove that the spatial or geographical as well as social bounds of Somalis were traditionally extended, as a result of their way of life.

9.4.2.3.2 Sharing Responsibilities

The ‘family’ in Somalia had networks of support which alleviated the sort of practical pressures Somali couple in Sweden faced. The ‘family’ in Somalia, for example, had the role of ‘sharing responsibility with couples’ in the sense that it helped in the up-bringing of

children as well as assisting with household chores. As reported by research respondents, members of the extended families (from the maternal and paternal families of both couples) were always at hand to offer a helping hand in household chores, baby-sitting or just looking after the children, among others, irrespective of whether parents (couples) were present – thanks largely to the mutual obligations and reciprocity members of the extended families felt towards one another.

In contrast, Somali couples in Sweden had to bring up their children and attend to their household chores entirely on their own. Moreover, bringing up children in Sweden was experienced by Somali couples as much more intense compared to Somalia. Indeed, although somewhat exaggerated, one respondent even talked of children in Sweden needing ‘24 hour supervision’, notwithstanding that children also attend school or parents had to attend to other business (education, work, etc). This exaggeration, nonetheless, carried another connotation, the fear that Somali children could go ‘astray’ in Sweden, if they were ‘not looked after’. ‘Astray’ here was used to connote the fear Somali parents had of their children becoming assimilated into the host society’s way of life if ‘unchecked’, to use a phrase of one respondent. Hence, the need for greater involvement in the lives of children in Sweden than would be the case in Somalia, where couples shared roles and responsibilities with members of their extended families.

9.4.2.3.3 Conflict Resolution

Traditionally, the extended family level was where disputes between couples were settled. However, it was also possible for the extended family to enlist the support of the sub-sub-clan, sub-clan and even clan where necessary. As reported, this may not always have been the case but where conflicts became protracted and drew in many related people across the sub-sub-clan and the sub-clan levels, it could potentially become a matter of concern for the wider clan. The reason why arbitration went to higher levels (i.e., beyond the extended family level) illustrates how Somalis tried to forestall family breakdowns in the advent of marital disputes. Indeed, many Somali research respondents emphasised how the ‘family’ lent its relentless and unwavering support to the parties when things between them did not work. That was often contrasted to the scenario in Sweden where such support system was either non-existent or where it did, was greatly reduced. As a consequence, many argued, the ‘familial’ role of solving spousal disputes was now largely transferred to Swedish authorities, to the detriment of Somalis (see below).

9.4.2.4 Involvement by State Authorities in ‘Private’ matters

A commonly held view among research respondents was that spousal conflicts among Somalis were exacerbated by the involvement of Swedish authorities (e.g., social services, police, courts, etc) in the lives of Somalis. These authorities had, in the eyes of these respondents, encroached or in some cases ‘substituted’ the traditional role of the ‘Somali family’ by

intervening and resolving spousal disputes. The ‘involvement by Swedish authorities’ links with the preceding theme, i.e., that of the ‘lack of extended family’ support in Sweden.

Moreover, many saw the involvement of Swedish authorities in family affairs, a sphere considered private and culturally sensitive, as counterproductive. Indeed, there were those who genuinely believed that the Swedish authorities exacerbated familial or spousal conflicts among Somalis rather than helped to solve them. The following sentiment by Fanan, a 45 year old male respondent, was illustrative of the mistrust and suspicion held towards Swedish authorities with regards to their involvement in Somali family affairs:

All they do was to worsen an already tense situation. Let alone in solving the issue, they themselves become part of the problem.

Fanan adds:

These authorities have no vested interest in keeping Somali families together. They help dissolve, not solve familial problems.

Moreover, a number of Somali male respondents expressed the view that the arbitration processes followed by Swedish authorities lacked balance or impartiality, since, in their eyes, men were nearly ‘always’ blamed for marital conflicts irrespective of the ‘rights or wrong’. However, there were other respondents who differed with the above assessment and who argued that Swedish authorities, as professionals, were fair and objective in their intervention

and judgement in mediating conflicts among Somali spouses. They argued that ‘impartiality’ or ‘neutrality’ was not really required. Instead, these respondents voiced their support for a more forceful ‘top-down’ or ‘partial approach’, similar to the way the ‘family’ in Somalia enforced compliance to ‘help spouses sort out their differences’. Hirab, a 55 year old male respondent had, for example, this to say:

At best they [authorities] want to portray a neutral stance. But neutrality is not needed... One must be biased or display unfairness at times in order to hold families together... as things may work better that way in the end.

Bashir, a 35 year old male respondent, argued in similar fashion:

Neutrality is like giving up, tantamount to solving nothing. If they want to solve problems they need to walk that extra mile, which frankly I believe they have no understanding for.

The majority of Somali male respondents were nostalgic about, and craved for, the traditional arbitration system of the ‘family’ in Somalia which ‘coerced’ women to remain in relations ‘that bit longer’ in the event of spousal disputes. As one respondent confirmed, ‘The family gave the parties ample time and opportunity to mend their differences in the course of time’. Indeed, it was unanimously endorsed that the Somali arbitration system seldom approved dissolutions, and, that it was *only* when the differences between the parties were deemed irreconcilable that such dissolution was allowed to occur. Farhiya, a 43 year old female respondent attests to the above:

In Somalia, we had cultural rules of mediation that had inbuilt checks and balances. Divorce in Somalia was always the last thing people resorted to. Here [Sweden] one feels as if divorce is the first resort.

9.4.2.5 Men feeling sidelined

Many Somali male research respondents felt the ‘system’ (used as a substitute for the ‘authorities’), purposively and meticulously ignored the concerns of Somali men whilst taking on board *only* the view of Somali women, in the event of a spousal conflict. Two concrete examples were given as to how Somali men felt sidelined by the ‘system’ in favour of Somali women. The first pertained to the case where authorities registered the ‘name of the family’ in the ‘name of the woman’. This was in reference to the files, records or registers kept on the family in social service (especially with regard to social assistance) and social security office (who administer housing allowance and child benefits, etc). Indeed, women were the prime ‘contact point’ for the authorities in the family, in the sense that, most information to and from the family were often channelled through the woman. All benefits accrued to the family also went directly to the personal account of the woman, giving her a considerable say in the way money was used within the family.

The second example related to the scenario where authorities ‘always compelled’ men to vacate the home whilst almost ‘always allowing’ women to retain the family house in the advent of separation or divorce between the parties. This was also the case in most Somali

families on social assistance, where the man would be expected to move out of the apartment irrespective of whether the tenancy was registered in his name or not.

The latter scenario was contrasted to that of Somalia where the woman normally left the husband's homestead to return to her paternal family. Moreover, in most cases, divorced women in Somalia would also be expected to leave the children behind with the husband. It was only where children were too small, i.e., needing breastfeeding, etc, where a divorcee would have custody of children, and even in that case only temporarily as the fathers could require the children to be returned to them when they were no longer in need of breastfeeding.

It should be noted that, in Somalia, women hardly ever lived on their own as they would most likely have to depend on their husbands for economic support. Once a woman was divorced the responsibility to support her automatically fell on their 'paternal' families. The husbands were bound (through customary and religious obligations) to pay child support only in cases where women were allowed to keep children after a divorce.

9.4.2.6 The Involvement of the Swedish Authorities

From the viewpoint of many Somali research respondents, there was a relatively high degree of involvement by the Swedish authorities, particularly, by the social services, in the lives of

Somali families. The main reason for their involvement was linked to the perceived prevalence of high unemployment among Somalis in Sweden. Moreover, many Somalis were not entitled to income-related benefits, e.g., unemployment-, sickness benefits, etc, precisely because they had no firm or steady foothold in the labour market (refer to Chapter Five). Accordingly, they had no alternative but to live off social assistance.

The administration of social assistance (e.g., eligibility criteria, verification eventual payments) falls under the jurisdiction of local social workers. To be eligible for social assistance, the individual would be required to contact the local employment exchanges or alternatively the social security office if the individual is sick or has a disability. The Social security office oversees rehabilitation of those who, for diverse reasons, cannot work. Thus, social services, local employment exchanges and the social security office regularly cooperate to help the unemployed secure work or become engaged in meaningful economic activity (education, training, etc) with a view to making individuals become self-sufficient in the long-run.

9.4.3 Weakening of Social Controls

Another outcome of the influences from the proactive Swedish welfare system and from Swedish society has been the perceived ‘weakening of social controls’ among Somalis in Sweden. The weakening of relative social control among Somalis correlated to the ‘waning’

influences of the ‘family’ as a powerful institution among Somalis in Sweden. As noted before, in the pre-migration context, the ‘family’ was instrumental in perpetuating and enforcing compliance to patriarchal gender relations among Somalis. It functioned as the mechanism through which marital conflicts were mediated, on one hand, and as an entity that relieved pressure on couples by helping with household chores and with child-minding, among others. Benign as these functions may have been, the underlying rationale was to maintain the status quo. Indeed, the ‘family’ functioned as a strong social control mechanism through which the behaviour and compliance of its members (particularly on the part of girls and women) were monitored. In this monitoring regime, male family members (e.g., brothers, husbands and other male relatives) had an ample say in, or even the final word in the affairs and destiny of women (especially unmarried ones) in relation to many areas in life (e.g., travel, education, marriage, etc).

Many of these functions have somewhat diminished in Sweden thanks to the fact that this society provides Somali women with a set of new conditions and opportunities (e.g., social welfare provisions, education, employment, etc) which have empowered Somali women to acquire, among other things, the virtue of relative ‘independence’ (from men and the ‘family’). Such ‘independence’ has invariably led to more marital conflict in light of changes occurring to Somali traditional gender patterns in Sweden (see above).

Arguably, the relative ‘weakening of social control’ among Somalis has also contributed to the ability of Somali women to ‘renegotiate’ patriarchal patterns inherent in Somali culture. For example, the courting rituals occurring among Somalis in Sweden has become redefined thanks in large part to these broader changes. This research suggests that Somali women are now able to court, and be courted with fewer restrictions from their ‘family’. They have also acquired a relative degree of anonymity and can retain that anonymity throughout the courting period(s) if they wished to do so. Moreover, women are now able to invite those whom they are courting to their own accommodations/apartment giving them more say in the practicality and direction of the courting process in a way and manner that suits them. Modern communications such as the internet have also aided in the attainment of relative anonymity between potential Somali couples.

9.5 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted how the patriarchy inherent in Somali culture has historically and culturally marginalised Somali women. It outlined the extent to which gender roles and the division of labour within Somali families (and to a greater extent, within the Somali community) were accepted as normal and unquestionable in pre-migration contexts.

The thrust of this chapter reports ‘renegotiations’ of patriarchy that is largely driven by Somali women, thanks to the catalytic role of the proactive Swedish welfare system (that creates

favourable condition for women in society) and influences from a society (i.e., Swedish) with different 'normative' gender norms and practices. These influences have led to a number of outcomes that further help undermine traditional Somali patriarchal gender patterns, which in turn create conditions for its 'renegotiation' in Sweden. These outcomes include: the acquisition of relative 'independence' by Somali women (from males and family), the propensity of spousal conflict (where 'rigid' patriarchal patterns continued unmodified) and the weakening of social control among Somalis (which enables women to choose their partners without recourse to family approval).

Nonetheless, a dilemma still remains about the extent to which Somalis would like to compromise with respect to the prevailing gender roles and cultural practices in Sweden. As this research has found, 'compromise' or 'flexibility' did not mean the full alignment of Somali gender patterns with normative Swedish gender behaviours and expectations. It was about 'meeting somewhere in-between', leaving behind the traditional Somali patriarchal patterns but not reaching the gender equality levels associated with Swedes to a full extent. It was as if many Somali respondents were saying 'they needed to compromise but just sufficiently'.

All in all, the renegotiation of patriarchy by Somalis in Sweden is still at a nascent stage and is largely unrecognised by the host society and its institutions thanks to the very high threshold of gender equality that exists in Sweden. Thus, from the viewpoint of the host society and its

institutions, patriarchy among Somalis in Sweden still remains largely intact, unchanged and problematic to their integration into mainstream society.

CHAPTER TEN

10 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this concluding chapter is to summarise the main themes raised in this research. It also aims to provide a number of policy recommendations relating to immigrant integration, particularly, in relations to Somalis immigrants in Sweden. A brief account of how this research has contributed to the existing body of knowledge will be outlined as will proposal about the way forward with regard to future research.

10.1 Summarising the Main Themes

The themes raised in this chapter constitute the main ‘integrative dilemmas’ relating to the integration of Somalis in Stockholm/Sweden. These are mainly socioeconomic, e.g., employment (labour market), education and housing (including structural hindrances, i.e., institutional forms of discrimination in the labour market and housing sectors), and cultural (emphasis on the family and clan relationships, religion and patriarchal gender roles). These themes are discussed as sub-titles organised around the research questions of this research. To reiterate, the research questions of this thesis consist of one main research question and two sub-questions. The main research question asks: How do Somali refugees in Sweden orientate themselves to the prevailing Swedish system of integration? The two sub-questions ask: What factors impinge upon the integration of Somalis in Sweden? And, how do cultural factors intrinsic to Somalis in Sweden inhibit their integration into mainstream Swedish society?

10.2 How do Somali refugees in Sweden orientate themselves to the prevailing Swedish system of integration?

Before we embark on answering this question, it is prudent to relate back to the concepts of ‘assimilation’ and ‘multiculturalism – the two core approaches to immigrant integration. This research concludes that ‘integration through assimilation’ may represent an old model of immigrant integration and may still ‘hang around’ for subsequent Somali generations, nonetheless, in this present time in history, assimilation is an option that is excluded, not least, because Somalis comprise mainly of first generation immigrants (i.e., refugees and their children). It also concludes that the majority of Somali are contented to ‘integrate through multiculturalism’ – an option that allows them to keep their Somalian culture and religious practices, whilst at the same time participating in the socio-economic life of society – which is in line with Swedish official multicultural policy. That said, they are still those Somalis who feel ‘multiculturalism Swedish style’ is still ‘assimilatory’, and hence, ‘resist’ it.

10.2.1 Integration through Assimilation

It can be concluded that from the standpoint of many members of the host society, assimilation is an ‘ideal’ approach when it comes to integrating their immigrants into society. Convention has it that, assimilation if adopted, would be the panacea to many of the ‘integrative dilemmas’ that afflicts migrant communities in Sweden. Indeed, assimilation (just as multiculturalism), is an ‘option’ that is still ‘open’ to both current and subsequent Somali

generations in Sweden, and to which they can voluntarily adopt. The question that begs an answer, however, is, can Somalis integrate through assimilation? Or put it another way, where do Somalis stand in their ‘assimilation process’ in today’s Sweden?

The reality is that the majority of Somalis in Sweden comprise of first generation immigrants, and hence, there is little or no assimilation taking place amongst them. Moreover, even their children – many of whom have now come of age – are no different since they, too, are very much embedded in the cultural patterns of their parents. Thus ‘integration through assimilation’ is an ‘option’ is overwhelmingly excluded for Somalis presently.

Indeed, Somalis are far off the mark the benchmarks established by Gordon’s (1964) ‘sub-processes of assimilation’, viz:- cultural, structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional, behaviour receptional and civic assimilation (see Chapter Two). Cultural assimilation or acculturation would have entailed the alignment of Somali culture to the host (Swedish) society. The goal for Somalis would have been to achieve a common culture and language; the same sense of dress codes; as well as, same value orientation, including memories, sentiments, ideas and attitudes (see Gordon, 1964). Structural assimilation by Somalis would have come about if Somalis were to achieve social, economic and political integration that were the same as those of native Swedes. This would only have been realisable if Somalis achieved ‘demographic’ and ‘socioeconomic’ traits that were equivalent to those of the native Swedes (Keefe and Padilla, 1987:19).

Anything beyond structural assimilation, e.g., such stages marital, Identificational, attitudinal receptional, behavioural receptional, and civic assimilation (Gordon, 1964) seems only too farfetched for Somalis. The reason is because these benchmarks represent the more ‘advanced stages’ of the process of assimilation – to which Somalis in Sweden are unlikely to fulfil, in the near and foreseeable future. To recuperate (see Chapter Two), marital assimilation entails a process of ‘fusion’, ‘interbreeding’ and ‘intermarrying’ with members of the host society (Park & Burgess, 1921:737, cited in Gordon, 1964:63-4). With identificational assimilation, the assimilated group would have lost its original, and hence, identified with the wider society. Attitudinal receptional assimilation and behavioural receptional assimilation would entail internalising the attitudes and behaviours of the core society respectively. In other words, the assimilated group would have aligned its attitudes and behaviour to the prevailing norms and values in the wider (host) society. Civic assimilation heralds a change in the intrinsic (e.g., ethical and religious values or practices) and extrinsic (e.g., a group’s sense of dress) cultural traits for the assimilated group that by now is so ‘dispersed’ that it becomes ‘indistinguishable’ from the majority group (Gordon, 1964:80; see Parekh, 2006:200). Civic assimilation completes the process of assimilation since there would be no cultural and religious differences that exist between the assimilated group and the majority society.

10.2.2 Integration through Multiculturalism

In Sweden, the path to immigrant integration is set out more or less in a more systematic and methodical way, than in many other countries in the Western Hemisphere. This has to do with Sweden's institutionalised welfare state model where many issues including immigration and immigrant integration are mediated. Policy objective on immigrant integration are, for example, well developed. There is also an elaborate scheme in place (i.e., programme measures, etc) involving a high level of planning and organisation that implements the policy of integrating immigrants into society. Moreover, there are a number of state and municipal actors engaged in immigrant integration. Thus for newcomers (or immigrants) to become incorporated into society and for them to attain the desired outcomes expected of them (by society), they 'have to' adhere to that 'path', closely.

The 'dilemma' comes, however, when there are individuals or immigrant groups who, for various reasons, are incapable of coping with the high level of 'planning' and the quest to achieve desired outcomes (from a policy perspective); or, when there are individuals or groups unwilling to become incorporated in the first place. When it comes to Somalis, this research concludes that their integration into Swedish society is problematic because they embody both of these 'dilemmas', i.e., their inability to cope with the high level of planning and the quest to achieve desired outcomes from an integration policy perspective, as well, the prevalence of 'unwillingness' among many Somalis to become incorporated in the first place. Nonetheless, whilst this is the general proposition adopted in assessing Somalis as a group, this research

also concludes that individual Somalis orientate themselves differently to the prevailing Swedish system of integration, as gleaned from the trajectories of Somali research respondents.

Accordingly, the analysis of this research has identified two main different groups in the way Somalis orientate themselves to the prevailing Swedish system of integration. One group took a more ‘pragmatic’ approach by making the best use of the opportunities provided for them in society to the best of their abilities. The other group ‘resisted’ nearly all forms of overtures from Swedish society aimed at integrating them into society, mainly, for ‘fear’ of ‘becoming assimilated’ into society. For descriptive reasons, we call the first group ‘Pragmatists’ and the latter, ‘Resisters’. To reiterate, this assessment is based on the viewpoints of Somali research respondents.

10.2.2.1 ‘Pragmatists’ versus ‘Resisters’

The ‘Pragmatists’ seem to integrate into Sweden by making the best use of the opportunities availed to them in society whilst, at the same time, being able to retain much of their Somalian cultural and religious practices in Sweden. The background of ‘Pragmatists’ reveal that they were urban-dwellers, prior to their arrival in Sweden (compared to many ‘Resisters’ who came mainly from rural background). Their ages varied ranging, for males, from 22-55 – the majority being in their late 30s and early 40s –, compared to female women ‘pragmatists’

whose age ranged from 19-32 years. Their family background(s) in Sweden varied too (as that of 'Resisters'). The most significant observation was that, there were more incidents of 'single', 'divorced' and 'divorced with children' family-constellations than was the case with the 'Resisters'. There were even two 'incidents' of 'cohabitation with children' among the 'Pragmatists' (something absent from the 'Resisters').

When it came to education, a number of observations were also made. Firstly, many 'Pragmatists' had some forms of education from Somalia (primary, education and university) prior to their arrival in Sweden. Secondly, a number of them were able to supplement their previous education, and were hence, able to acquire skills that improved their employability in Sweden. As part of their pragmatic approach, this group seemed to downgrade their expectation of attaining work commensurate to their education (whether achieved outside or inside Sweden) in their bid to secure work. Other 'pragmatists' have tried the 'long route' to obtain educational advancement (i.e., by starting from the 'scratch' to acquiring a university degree) by being persistent and determined to achieve the educational goals they set out for themselves when they came to Sweden. For this later group, the dividend often came with the reward of employment in the profession of their choice, hence, making a positive mark for themselves on the personal level.

The 'Pragmatists' viewed Sweden as their place or 'home' for now and in the foreseeable future. There was a sense of 'they have arrived' and looked forward to a 'promising' future in

Sweden. They were, for the most part, somewhat receptive and harboured somewhat favourable attitudes towards the host society and institutions. Here is where one found the most 'balanced' criticisms of both the host society and the Somali ethnic group in Sweden.

The 'Resisters, on the other hand, constituted mostly of people who felt strongly about the importance of maintaining Somalis cultural and religious beliefs 'intact', in Sweden. Many of the 'Resisters' were people who came from rural background(s) in Somalis. Their ages varied, ranging from 40-53 for males and 25-43 for females. There were more 'incidences' of 'married with children', some few 'divorced with children', and, no occurrence of 'single/unmarried' or cohabitation when it came to their family constellation. It could be concluded, therefore, that marriage as an institution was valued in accordance with Somalian cultural (and religious) practices among the 'Resisters' compared to the 'Pragmatists'.

When it came to education, many of the 'Resisters' had little (lower primary, primary level) or no educational background at all, prior to their arrival in Sweden. 'Resisters' could also fit, to a greater extent, into the description of those 'Somalis who have not made use of Swedish educational system'. Some in this group seemed to have 'stagnated' from the outset since they had little to improve their educational status. A few 'stuck with' their previous 'qualifications' and work experiences accrued from Somalia. A number of the respondents who had not acquired a 'single, viable job' since coming into Sweden, ten or fifteen years ago, at the time of interviews fitted into this category of 'Resisters', too.

Although the ‘Resisters’ may not have qualitatively advanced in terms of education, they have, nonetheless, participated in numerous training and skill-enhancing courses (as part of Sweden’s labour enforcement strategy of activating its workforce). The attitudes of some ‘Resisters’, indicated, however, that they participated in these courses often not to improve their chances, in terms of education or in the labour market, but merely as a means to fulfil the eligibility criteria of some benefits, e.g., unemployment benefit (*A-Kassa*) and or social assistance, that requires claimants to engage in some form of economic activity to receive those benefits.

In contrast to the ‘Pragmatists’, ‘Resisters’ harboured negative attitudes towards the host society and its institutions (when compared to ‘Pragmatists’). They often blamed and found explanation and justification for their predicament in structural barriers, such as unemployment and discrimination. Other ‘Resisters’ were less negative or bitter towards the host society and its institutions, but were, nonetheless, indifferent. The latter seemed to favour the status quo in order to ‘preserve’ their cultural and religious peculiarities from ‘outside’ interference (implying society).

There was also a sense of ‘temporariness’ among ‘Resisters’. Many expressed their wish to relocate from Sweden. They often said they had no other choice but to remain in Sweden at least for now (i.e., temporarily). Thus, for ‘Resisters’, Sweden was not ‘home’ but a transitory halfway house where people stayed until they were able to relocate to another country deemed

favourable or sympathetic to their cultural and religious practices. Some ‘Resisters’ were hampered from relocating to other countries because of financial constraints, other had spouses who had not yet become Swedish citizens, etc. A few ‘Resisters’ have, however, managed to relocate their families (spouses and children) to countries in East Africa and the Middle East for reasons connected to their children’s religious education.

Indeed, a number of ‘Resisters’ emphasised the ‘threat’ they and their children faced from ‘assimilation’ in Sweden. They spoke of the difficulties they encountered in inculcating their cultural and religious values to their children, and blamed their ‘continued presence’ in Sweden as a factor. They were also vehemently opposed the ‘empowerment’ of Somali women (i.e., greater social and economic independence) in Sweden. These ‘Resisters’ were often the ones who felt strongly about the renegotiation of patriarchal gender relations by Somali women in Sweden (see Chapter Nine).

10.3 What factors impinge upon the integration of Somalis in Sweden?

This research has identified a number of factors that adversely impact on the integration of Somalis in Sweden. In answering this research sub-question, we limited ourselves to the *structural and socio-economic aspects of integration*, viz-: employment (labour market) and education, housing, and, institutional forms of discrimination. *Cultural aspects* of integration are dealt with in subsequent sub-question (see below). The reason why there is less emphasis

on *the civic and political aspect of integration* in this thesis will be dealt with latter (see below).

10.3.1 Employment (Labour Market) and Education

One of the major problems that impinge upon the integration of Somalis in Sweden is unemployment. Unemployment rates among groups, e.g., Somalis, are often unavailable from official Swedish statistics. However, the economic activity participations rates of groups (e.g., education, training programmes, employment, etc.) may at times appear in statistics and literature to gauge how well a group is integrating into society. The economic activity rates of Somalis in 1999 and 2003 were, for example, put at approximately 27% and 23 % respectively (see *Invandrarverket*, 1999; Carlson, 2006). It is the contention of this research that the overall situation of Somalis in Stockholm/Sweden may have slightly improved in subsequent years but not as markedly as one would have desired, not least from an integration standpoint.

Widespread unemployment among Somalis in Sweden has persisted from the early 1990s. The early 1990s was important in two aspects. First, it was the period when the Swedish economy suffered its worst crisis in recent memory. This crisis was characterized by a deep recession, falling GDP, high unemployment, redundancies, relocation of industries, etc. Second, this period coincided with the arrival of relatively large numbers of Somalis into Sweden. This

recession lasted for several years. Somalis, as refugees, and vulnerable people, could only become further marginalized under these circumstances.

When the Swedish economy emerged from recession towards the end of 1990s, the labour market for Somalis did not improve. This is because the emergent economy was a 'restructured' economy where fundamental changes had occurred to the labour market and the nature of jobs. Many of the jobs generated by the economy were found mainly in high-tech industries and Information technology (IT), which meant an overall decrease in the numbers of low skilled jobs in the economy. Consequently, only the relatively highly educated, highly mobile and skilled workers could compete and benefit from this 'new' economy. For Somalis, this economy spelt even further gloom since their prospect to compete and benefit from it was almost non-existent. The inability to adjust to the new conditions meant that their unemployment attained quasi-permanent status in Sweden.

This research has also highlighted 'unsuitable education' among Somalis as problematic to their integration into mainstream society. The prevalence of 'illiteracy', which like 'unsuitable education' had a close bearing to the labour market relations of Somalis in Sweden, was also explored. Both 'illiteracy' and 'unsuitable education' were problematic particularly against the backdrop of a knowledge-based society where scarcity (and competition) for menial jobs made it impossible for those afflicted to gain a foothold in the Swedish labor market.

A further issue that emerged from this research was the notion (particularly among Swedish officials) that Somalis had done ‘little to improve their educational status’, both quantitatively and qualitatively to increase their chances for successful integration in Sweden. This ‘failure’ happens against a backdrop where education is provided free of charge up to and including university; where study assistance (earmarked for student upkeep) is available until the age of 55; and, where citizens have numerous ‘avenues’ to educate themselves, e.g., from study circles, to adult education proper (refer to Chapter Five).

This research has, nonetheless, emphasized contributory factors as to why Somalis may have ‘failed’ to grasp the opportunities accorded to them in society in relation to education, and by extension to improve their labour market situation in Sweden. These include, a ‘commitment to family’ (e.g., those left behind in Somalia who face enormous problems which they have to cope with unaided), ‘abrupt transition’ from pre-industrial to a post-industrial society, and the ‘temporariness’ of Somalis in Sweden (i.e., people who wanted to relocate to other countries deemed sympathetic to their cultural and religious practice than is the case in Sweden).

10.3.2 Housing

This research has underlined residential segregation as a factor that impinges upon the integration of Somalis in Sweden. The research has found that the causes, maintenance and perpetuation of residential segregation between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes were both

individually and structurally driven. It was individually driven in the sense that Somalis wanted to live in close proximity with one another. It is structurally determined in the sense that residential segregation between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes was often caused by socioeconomic factors (e.g., unemployment, low incomes, etc) and policy changes that had ‘unintended’ consequences on residential segregation in Stockholm, i.e., factors external to ‘individual preferences’.

As alluded to previously, ‘individual preferences’ referred to a situation where Somalis themselves contributed to their own residential segregation in Stockholm. The reason was because many Somalis wanted to live in close proximity with one another. A number of factors have led this researcher to believe this was the case. First, many Somalis moved from communes outside Stockholm where they were initially resettled. The resettlement of Somalis in communes outside the three major metropolitan areas of Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö was in line with the Swedish refugee dispersion policy in 1990s. This policy aimed at discouraging concentrations of immigrants in a few areas and to counter some of the negative impact associated with ‘unplanned’ immigration (social exclusions, unemployment, residential segregation, etc). Second, once Somalis moved to Stockholm, they almost always ended up in Rinkeby and Tensta, two predominantly immigrant dense suburbs, and home to the overwhelming majority of Somalis in the City (i.e., where their friends and acquaintance live). Third, Somalis had ‘some’ options to settle in other less segregated suburbs to which they may not have explored fully. The option for more choice in residential patterns in Sweden was

often made possible through social housing which ensured that rents were standardized throughout the city.

This research has found that ‘individual preferences’ were influenced by a number of factors. First, it was in these (residentially segregated) suburbs where Somalis could find vital information about how they could ‘go about’ in their adoptive country, not least in their initial years of residency in Sweden. Second, by moving into areas where their countrymen lived, Somalis were able to overcome the kind of loneliness and isolation they experienced in the communes from which they moved from, and in which they were initially resettled. Third, there were religious and cultural considerations that ‘forced’ many Somalis to move into Stockholm. For example, it was the availability of makeshift mosques and informal Quranic schools for children in Rinkeby and Tensta that largely prompted many Somalis to move Stockholm. Somalis were also drawn into the segregated suburbs in Stockholm because of a budding ‘Somalian enclave economy’ that served their cultural and religious needs. It is in Rinkeby and Tensta where one finds *Halal* food, clothes, cultural-specific accessories, etc. It is also here Somalis can find and use the services of *Hawala*’, an informal banking and money transfer system. Somalis use *Hawala* to send remittances to their relatives in Somalia and in other places of the world where formal banking hardly reaches.

Residential segregation between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes was also caused, maintained and perpetuated by socio-economic differences. The relative lack of language competences

and ‘unsuitable’ education, poor participation in the labour market and the relative short duration of residency in Sweden made it relatively hard for Somalis to attain residential mobility that could lead to their residential de-segregation.

The length of residence by Somalis in Sweden was important in that making a career in housing often requires a considerable amount of time. People have to establish themselves by acquiring education, building their careers and putting away savings in a bid to buy own homes, etc. However, when it comes to Somalis, their length of residence in the country has been relatively short. Moreover, during their relatively short residencies in Sweden, many Somalis were largely preoccupied in the acquisition of language competence and education in the hope of gaining a foothold in the Swedish labour market, hence, the difficulty in making housing ‘careers’.

Another example of structural factor that causes, maintains and perpetuates residential segregation between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes related to unintended consequences that derived from the changes in policy, which eventually impacted on their residential patterns in Stockholm. Examples of these included specific policy changes in housing, immigration and immigrant integration that took place between 1960 and 1990. These examples are congruent with existing literature on housing in Stockholm.

With respect to housing, this research underscores the ‘unintended’ consequence that resulted from the One Million Housing Programme. This programme was initiated in 1965 and ended in the mid-1970s. It aimed to eradicate housing shortages in the metropolitan areas. The One Million Housing Programme resulted in the construction of many new suburbs. However, many ‘native’ Swedes who initially settled into these suburbs eventually moved to other areas deemed more appealing, from an individual or familial perspective. Many immigrants and refugees latter moved into these suburbs ‘vacated’ by ‘native’ Swedes.

The main change in Swedish immigration policy which had an intended consequence on the residential patterns in Stockholm occurred as a result of the shift in focus from labour migration to refugee migration from the Mid-1970s. More refugees and their families coming to Stockholm increasingly settled into suburbs where they had relatives and friends, reinforcing the concentration of immigrants in a number of suburbs.

Another policy change with unintended consequence that occurred was the abandonment of Swedish Refugee Dispersal Policy, also called the ‘Whole Swedish Strategy’ (*Hela Sverige Strategin*), in the Mid-1990s. This meant refugees who were initially dispersed across the whole country could now settle in Stockholm. More often, they would settle in already segregated areas where they had relative and friends (for more refer to Chapter Seven).

Needless to say, there are many negative impact of residential segregation on inhabitants in segregated suburbs in metropolitan regions like Stockholm. Firstly, the lack of connectivity with the host population entails fewer opportunities to practice speaking Swedish. It also means exclusion from the informal social networks of Swedes. These informal social networks or 'contacts' as they are called have become decisive in Sweden since it is through these recommendations that people acquire jobs in the labour market. 'Native' connectivity also has the potential to break down barriers and enhance tolerance and understanding between people. Secondly, many inhabitants in these suburbs are unemployed. The number of people living off social assistance is often higher in these suburbs than in less segregated suburbs, as a consequence of unemployment. There is also an established relationship between unemployment and poor health in these segregated areas (see Chapter Six). Thirdly, public services (social, health, education, recreational, etc) in segregated areas are often poorer in relation to those provided elsewhere in the city (i.e., in less segregated areas). One recurrent example was the perceived relationship between relative poor educational services (e.g., lack of qualified personnel, deteriorating teaching standards, etc) in these suburbs and negative impact this has on the educational performance of children in schools located in these suburbs. Fourthly, high staff turn-over in segregated areas contributes to deficient service provisions in these areas, especially, with regard to vital sectors like education, health and social services. The working conditions of key workers (e.g., teachers, health workers, etc) were likely to be less favourable than those of their counterparts in less segregated areas. Huge work-loads for those working in these areas was, for example, identified as one reason for the relative high staff turn-over in these areas occurred. Last but not least, the perception of high crime rates in segregated suburbs impacts negatively on their inhabitants. These suburbs often have a

reputation of being ‘tough neighbourhoods’, hence, their negative image in the eyes of ‘native’ Swedes. That in turn makes meaningful interaction and engagement with their inhabitants (by ‘native’ Swedes) often unlikely, and hence, having a negative impact on their integration.

10.3.3 Institutional Forms of Discrimination

This research found institutional forms of discrimination in Swedish labour market and housing as a barrier to the integration of Somalis in Sweden. Within the context of Swedish labour market relation, institution discrimination was inherent mainly in the employment screening procedures of employing organizations. It is here where most Somalis often felt they were ‘deliberately’ and systematically ‘sidelined’ in preference to other candidates, notably, ‘native’ Swedes or others deemed to have less ‘objectionable’ characteristics in the eyes of Swedish employers.

Partiality within the recruitment processes of many employing organization manifested itself in a number of ways. One perception among Somalis was that that job applications were not often subjected to impartial processes that should be accorded to citizens according to the law. A widespread perception among respondents was that the bearing of a ‘foreign name’ was all it took for applicants to be excluded from job short-list or interviews. Hitches also occurred at interviews, where a number of research respondents reported they were subjected to intrusive

and unfair questioning, a further illustration of the existence of institutional discrimination in the recruitment processes of employing organizations in Sweden.

Nonetheless, this research was able to highlight one alternative explanation to institutional discrimination in the Swedish labour market. This was mainly outlined by Swedish officials. It related to the ‘suitability’ of Somali candidates for many of the jobs created in the Swedish economy. ‘Suitability’ here connotes having the relevant qualifications, skills and work experiences needed for the jobs in the labour market. Another disadvantage that afflicted Somalis related to the ‘gaps in their life histories’ and the prolonged ‘lack of contact’ with the labour market – factors that also influenced decisions when it came to recruiting Somali workers.

Institutional forms of discrimination were also widespread in housing. It is arguable the reasons why some Somalis (as other immigrants) ended up in residentially segregated suburbs in Stockholm was precisely because housing corporation/agents allocated accommodation to Somalis (as like other minorities) and ‘native’ Swedes according to differential/preferential treatments. By ‘manipulating’ the housing queuing system, agents often steered Somalis away from the more affluent, more reputable ‘native’ dominated suburbs, and, into already segregated suburbs where residential vacancies or ‘openings’ for ‘immigrant clientele’ often existed. Withholding information about residential openings in non-segregated areas from Somalis by housing agents was also identified as a form of institutional discrimination in

housing. Conversely, Swedish applicants were steered away from segregated suburbs into the more reputable suburbs.

10.4 How do cultural factors intrinsic to Somalis in Sweden inhibit their integration into mainstream Swedish society?

This research argues that the Somali group in Sweden diverges ‘excessively’ from prevailing cultural standards, hence, their difficulty in integrating into mainstream society. In particular, it was in the spheres of ‘culture’, ‘religion’ and ‘gender patterns’ (i.e., gender relations and roles) where many of these ‘divergences’ with prevailing Swedish cultural standards were identified. When it come to ‘religion’, the issue is a little more complicated, in the sense that Islamophobia – the ‘fear’, ‘dread’, ‘hatred’ and ‘demonisation’ of Islam and Muslims as the ‘other’ in Sweden (as is in the rest of Europe), which is a ‘special form of racism’ – may play a role in (a) exaggerating the ‘divergences’ between Somalis and native Swedes, and, (b) excluding Somalis from the socio-economic and public life of Sweden (see Runnymede Trust Report on Islamophobia, 1997:1-5; Marranci, 2004:106; Allen, 2010:65).

10.4.1 Cultural Divergence

This research has found that ‘cultural divergence’ stems largely from the intensity individuals attach to the role of the ‘family’. ‘Native’ Swedes are encouraged to become stronger individuals or citizens, and hence, attach less emphasis on family bonds and more on personal independence, self-reliance and ‘autonomy’ (from the family). Somalis, on the other hand, prioritise the importance of family/clan network relationships over their individual goals, making it virtually impossible for the individual to turn away from his/her family/clan or to undertake an independent life. This is likely to give rise to tensions since Somalis were expected to behave like ‘responsible’ Swedish citizens, who were individually responsible for their actions/inactions and obligations to the wider society rather than the clan.

Although the clan has many positive functions among Somalis, it was, nonetheless, problematic to their integration in Sweden. For example, inter-clan rivalries and antagonism between various clan-families can foster further divisions. This research concludes that, Somalis need to demonstrate a relatively high degree of internal cohesion as a group, before one could talk of them integrating into mainstream Swedish society successfully. It seems clear that a ‘fragmented’ group will have more difficulty in integrating into another larger and more cohesive group, hence, the ‘need’ of the former to attain greater internal stability and cohesion.

10.4.2 ‘Religious Divergence’

This research identifies the tensions between Islam (a religion Somalis subscribe to) and Swedish secularism (which was fiercely secular) as a major source of contention between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes. Somalis have no demarcation between ‘culture’ and ‘religion’, the two are intertwined. Also as adherents of Islam, Somalis do not make distinctions between private and public spheres, as ‘demanded’ by both Swedish secularism and multiculturalism. Moreover, Somalis demonstrate a relative high degree of religiosity as illustrated by their requests for ‘additional’ support or rights (e.g., prayer rooms, time off for Friday prayers, etc).

The relative high degree of religiosity among Somalis occurs against a backdrop of immense opposition and suspicion towards Islam in Sweden and elsewhere. Islam in Sweden is, by and large, regarded as a ‘threat’ both in the literal and figurative sense. The literal threat associates Islam with intolerance, violence, terrorism, etc. The figurative threat relates to the kind of threat Islam poses to the Swedish way of life (principles, norms, values, etc). Islam was also criticized in Sweden for stifling people’s personal freedoms and liberties; its unfair treatment of women; its ‘grandiose’ nature (e.g., its tendency of not confining itself purely to spiritual matters, its transnational rather than local focus and outlook); and, for its advocacy of *Sharia Law* (perceived by many in Sweden as ‘draconian’). All these factors made Somalis, as adherents of Islam (coupled with their deep religiosity, e.g., through their demands for ‘dispensations’ in public spaces and outward displays of veils by Somali women) particularly

vulnerable to the opposition and suspicion held against Islam in Swedish society, and the negative scrutiny that this may entail.

The veil was particularly highlighted as a contentious symbol in Sweden. In the Swedish context, the veil is often associated with oppression of women. In a country where people strongly support gender equality, any hint of rolling back the gains of this achievement is fiercely opposed. Other issues relating to the veil include, the way in which it can inhibit meaningful day-to-day interaction with ‘native’ Swedes obstruct ‘practitioner – client relationship’ (in the context of health and social services settings); present ‘maneuverability’ problems in the street and in workplaces; as something that affronts ideal image and aesthetics of Swedish society, etc. The ‘contempt’ for the veil in Sweden becomes even more compounded when worn by children under 15, the age of consent.

The vast majority of Somali women wear veils, mainly the *Hijab* (headscarf). These women face discrimination and many of them are excluded from participating in economic activities, e.g., work for reasons related to their ‘veiling’. This presents a dilemma to their integration into society.

10.4.3 ‘Divergence in Gender Roles and Patterns’

This research highlighted patriarchy (and divergent gender relation patterns) as one of the cultural features of Somalis which brings them into conflict with prevailing socio-cultural standards and norms in Sweden. This occurs against the backdrop of a country and society that is regarded as one of the least ‘gendered’ societies in the world; where the participation of women in economic activities (employment, education, etc) is rated as among the highest in the world; and, where socialisation processes in the family and educational institutions (from pre-schooling onwards) are geared towards the eradication of patriarchy in society. Moreover, the Swedish welfare system is conspicuously women friendly. The need for male breadwinners has been eliminated, thanks to Swedish taxation and redistribution policies which ensure that women can live an independent life without recourse to family or male relatives.

Patriarchy among Somalis thus stands in stark contrast to Swedish gender equality. It is viewed in the host society as not only an affront to gender equality (one very key achievement by Swedish (welfare) society with which Swedes greatly identify), but also an attempt to roll back the gains made in society with regard to gender roles and relations. Nonetheless, this research also reveals that there is evidence to suggest that Somalis in Sweden are beginning to ‘renegotiate’ patriarchy inherent in their culture. As a caveat though, this renegotiation of patriarchy has not been recognised by the host society because of the latter’s high threshold for matters relating to gender equality. Renegotiation of patriarchy among Somalis has largely

resulted from the influence of the proactive social welfare system (that promotes gender equality through its diverse policy initiatives) and interaction in Swedish society – a society with a different normative practices, expectations and attitudes with regard to gender issues than the one Somalis were accustomed to before their arrival in Sweden.

Paradoxically, whilst this ‘renegotiation’ amounted to a re-think in traditional Somali gender patriarchal patterns, it has also caused of a great deal of consternation in Somali families in particular, and within the Somali community in Sweden, at large. Whilst Somali women have much to gain from the renegotiation of patriarchy, Somali men who cling to the ‘old’ way have much to lose.

10.5 Can Islamophobia be ruled-out?

This research sub-question has located the ‘problem’ of integration that Somalis face squared on their cultural ‘divergence’ with native Swedes (e.g., the intensity Somalis attach to the role of the ‘family’ and the ‘clan’, the tensions with Islam by Swedish society, and, patriarchal render roles and patterns). Nonetheless, this research can conclude that Islamophobia has a role in (a) exaggerating these ‘divergences’, and (b) in excluding Somalis (being overwhelmingly Muslims) from the socioeconomic and public life of Sweden (cf. Runnymede Trust Report on Islamophobia, 1997). Many of the sentiments or issues that were raised relating to Islam and Muslims in this research (e.g., the viewing of Islam as a ‘threat’; the

associates of Islam with intolerance, violence and terrorism; the perception that Islam stifled individual freedoms and liberties; the believe that Muslims women are treated unfair; the perceive ‘fear’ of *Sharia Law*; and, opposition of Muslim veil in public spaces) may all stem from or linked to the prevalence of Islamophobia in Sweden (refer to Chapter Eight).

Islamophobia is defined as ‘fear’ and ‘prejudice’; the ‘dread’ or ‘hatred’ of Islam; the ‘fear’ and ‘dislike’ of or towards Islam and Muslim (Runnymede, 1997:1-5; Allen, 2010:65). It is the demonisation of all Muslims as the ‘other’ irrespective of whether they observe Islam or not (*Arbetsmarknadsdepartmentet*, 2011:8). It is an ideology that can be equated with racism (Allen, 2010), or as Marranci (2004:106) put it, a special, sophisticated form of racism’.

Islamophobia pervades society in Western Europe including Sweden where there is a widespread perception that Islam is incompatible with Western culture and values. This is underscored by the British Runnymede Trust Report on Islamophobia (1997:5) which argues that ‘views’ about Muslims and Islam in Western society is one that is ‘closed’. According to this report Islam is seen as monolithic, static and unresponsive to change; Muslims as separate and the “other”; Islam as inferior; Muslims as irrational and barbaric; Muslims as the “enemy” – and associated with violence, aggression and being supportive of terrorism; Islam is as a political ideology with political and militaristic global agenda; and that, prejudices against Islam is seen as “natural” and “normal” (Runnymede Trust Report, 1997:10). The latter is

reinforced by Allen (2010:1) who argues that ‘Islamophobia is becoming both increasingly prevalent and socially acceptable in contemporary Europe’.

Islamophobia is a factor that impinges upon the integration of Muslims (Somalis included) in that it is a ‘practice of discrimination against Muslims’, and, the basis of excluding Muslims from the socioeconomic and public life of the nation (see the British Runnymede Trust Report on Islamophobia, 1997). These discriminatory practices are encountered in employment and housing (refer to chapters Five and Six) and in provisions of services, e.g., health, education, etc.

Moreover, Muslims encounter Islamophobia in the media (see below) and in ‘everyday conversations’ in the public (Runnymede Trust Report, 1997:11; see Allen & Nielsen, 2002). One reason why Islamophobia pervades society is because, Islam is viewed as a ‘challenge’ and threat to Western (Swedish) values and life-styles’ (Marranci, 2004:110). Moreover, many fear that multiculturalism, if unchecked, would lead to far-reaching consequences. Already, there is widespread perception in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe that Muslims cannot integrate into society because they (Muslims) are bent on retaining their cultural and religious differences, and hence, their inability to integrate. Another ‘threat’ relates to the ‘fear’ of Islam ‘transforming’ the ‘face of Europe’, which stems from the ‘growing’ numbers of Muslims in Western Europe, thanks to ‘immigration and high birth rates’ (see Coleman, 2008:252).

Islamophobia has become more pronounced since 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States (Allen & Nielsen, 2002), where the fight against terrorism has become entangled with Islamophobia, exacerbating the already existing suspicion, fear of and hatred against Islam and Muslims (*Arbetsmarknadsdepartment*, 2011: 14). The media has also ‘perpetrates islamophobia’ by portraying Islam in negative light (Poole, 2002:41). As Marranci (2004:105) confirms, the ‘image of Islam presented to readers and viewers’ is often one that is ‘distorted’ and ‘grotesque’, since, little devotion is given to other nuances such as ethnic and cultural differences among Muslims.

Indeed, in Sweden, there is evidence to suggest that hate crimes motivated by Islamophobia has increased in recent years. This is illustrated by a crime survey carried out by Brå (2008) which reveals that in 2008, there were 600 cases of anti-religious motivated crimes reported to Swedish police – twice the cases reported in the preceding year. According to Brå (2008), 45% of these anti-religious motivated crimes were assessed as Islamophobic, compared to 28% as ‘other anti-religious motivated crimes’ and 26% as anti-Semitic.

10.6 Civic and Political Integration, a lesser priority

As observed, there is *less* emphasis on the ‘civil and political’ integration of Somalis in this research, when compared to their ‘structural’ and ‘cultural’ aspects of integration in Sweden. The reason why civic and political aspects of integration was not been dealt with ‘expansively, was twofold. First, few research respondents had viewed civic and political aspect of integration as apriority, compared to the socioeconomic integration of Somalis in Sweden. Second, few Somalis seemed to have achieved firm ties with the host society to warrant them to fully engage in/with the civic and political life in Sweden. By civic and political integration one means dimensions of ‘citizenship’ that go beyond ‘mere legal status and rights’ (and duties) that are enjoyed by Somalis by virtue of being Swedish citizens.

Indeed, many Somali research respondents have affirmed that they had ‘extensive’ legal status and rights in Sweden. The examples they gave was legal protection and expansive civil liberties – rights they never had in their country of origin. These ‘rights’ also gave them access to basic welfare services and provisions, e.g., education, employment, health and social security, as citizens. Nonetheless, it was self-evident, as expressed by a number of research respondents, that citizenship carries ‘meanings’ that were ‘larger than’ mere legal rights or civil liberties (or the mere ability to fulfill some basic criteria in order to acquire Swedish citizenship). Citizenship requires a much deeper meaning or feelings, i.e., real ‘participation’ and ‘belongingness’ – linking us to two dimensions of citizenship that was alluded to earlier in

Chapter Two. It is in these two dimensions that Somalis was said to have fallen short when it came to in their civic and political integration in Sweden.

There were a number of factors that were said to have contributed to this lack of civic and political integration of Somalis in Sweden. These include, their ‘lack of socioeconomic and cultural integration’; ‘clanism’, the ‘ineffectiveness of Somali ethnic organizations’; and the ‘temporariness’ of (some) Somalis in Sweden.

The lack of socioeconomic integration (e.g., incomes, education, employment, housing, etc) by Somalis in Sweden and the prevalence of structural barriers such as unemployment and discrimination contributed to the lack of civic and political integration by Somalis in Sweden. Furthermore, the lack of cultural integration by Somalis meant they lacked connectivity or established forms of reciprocity and trust (i.e., in social relations) with native Swedes – all reinforcing the notion that Somalis lacked a ‘deeper sense of belongingness’, ‘shared’ identity and ‘nationhood’ to engage in the civic and political life of Swedish society.

The clan was also lifted as a factor that is a barrier to the ‘participation’ of Somalis in Swedish civic and political life. The reason is because Somalis attach great importance to their family and clan relationship and their loyalty is first and foremost to these institutions. The ‘family’ and the clan obliges Somalis to ‘help’ their members, particularly, those left behind in Somalia

or in other Eastern African countries, home to many Somali refugees. This outward focus makes Somalis to engage less, civically, in Sweden.

Another factor that could positively influence the civic and political integration of Somalis was the role Somalis ethnic organizations could have played – of which they have fallen short of. Ideally, ethnic organisations serve important functions in Sweden. They serve as meeting points where people meet and discuss their common good. They act as important vehicle to mobilise people for specific goals. They act as a medium in which the state communicates its (integration) policy to respective ethnic communities. They also act as ‘potential vehicles’ for bridging between ethnic communities and promoting wider social connections (Ager & Strang, 2010:591). Thus, ethnic organizations play a decisive role in promoting ‘participatory’ citizenship.

To the majority of research respondents, these functions were said to devoid of many Somali ethnic organizations in Sweden. They were criticised for not being up to task. Others took issues with their ‘sheer numbers’ and their ‘overlapping roles’ in serving the community. As one research respondent reinforced, ‘there are simply *too many* Somali ethnic organisations doing the same thing whilst competing for the same clientele’. Moreover, divisions along clan-lines among Somalis were said to compound the shortcomings of Somali ethnic organizations since, they too, are run and ‘organised’ along clan families, reinforcing the well-established

divisions within Somalian community, thereby, counteracting the aims of the Swedish government.

Last but not least, the ‘temporariness’ in Sweden was another factor that was said to influence the civic and political participation in Sweden. This relates to the propensity of Somalis to relocate to a third country they deemed was favourable to Somalian cultural and religious practices (see ‘Resisters’, above). For civic and political integration to occur, it requires Somalis to ‘psychologically’ invest in Sweden. They should not view Sweden as ‘home’ and not a transitory location from where they could ‘come and go’, to use the paraphrase of one research respondent.

In all, it can be concluded that, ‘real’ civic engagement or political participation requires the acquisition of some deeper feelings, i.e., of participation, belongingness, share values, identity and nationhood. These were yet to be achieved by Somalis in Sweden.

10.7 Policy Recommendations

This research concludes by providing a number of recommendations and suggestions which it hopes would go some way in helping with the smooth transition of Somalis immigrants in Sweden. The research makes the following recommendations: the need for a mentorship or apprenticeship programme; a more vigorous monitoring programme to counter institutional discrimination; the need to understand and appreciate ‘divergent’ cultures; the need to review the ‘over-emphasis’ on the ‘individual’ in Swedish integration policy, by taking into account the world-view of collectivist clan-based minorities like Somalis; the need for a debate on Swedish integration policy itself, which is egalitarian in orientation; the need to involve ‘native’ Swedes (private citizens) in Swedish integration policy as ‘co-owners’ of immigrant integration; and, the need to focus and allocate resources towards to help integrate Somali youths into Swedish society.

First and foremost, this research acknowledges the enormous problems that Somalis face in integrating into Swedish society. The problems are both individual (low or inappropriate education, lack of experience, etc) and structural (e.g., unemployment, discrimination, etc). If these problems were to be surmounted, they have to be tackled both on the individual and structural levels.

On the individual (as well as structural) level, access to the labour market can be identified as a prime integrative dilemma for Somalis in Swedish society. Many Somalis seem to be incapable of fulfilling one important requirement presented by Swedish labour market, i.e., its need for a skilled work force. As previously noted, even when it comes to menial jobs, Somalis with no, or low educational levels, stand disadvantaged as these jobs are relatively competitive.

One way of overcoming this problem, at least in the short term, is to offer ‘disadvantaged’ Somalis a mentorship or apprenticeship programme through the Swedish Labour Market Board (AMS) or their municipalities. The programmes could simulate real-work environments and could take place in both private and public enterprises. Through such a programme, Somalis could receive not only the necessary guidance, supervision and advice from their mentors but they could also learn and gain the ‘skills’ that could help them compete for jobs in the labour market. They could also acquire referees for their job-seeking process through such a programme.

On housing and the problem of residential segregation, this research acknowledges the complexity of the problems Somalis face. The reason is because housing issues are mainly market and structurally driven. For that matter Somalis will need to improve their socio-economic status if they were to integrate residentially with native Swedes or if they were to move from the residentially-segregated suburbs (e.g., Rinkeby and Tensta) into other less

segregated suburbs in Stockholm. On the individual level, Somalis can still try to influence or depart from what kept many of them in segregated suburbs, i.e., their ‘preference’ of living in close proximity with one another, by moving to less segregated suburbs. Whether that happens or not remains to be seen.

To counter institutional discrimination in the labour market and housing, a much more vigorous enforcement of existing laws is required. One recommendation from this research is for the Swedish Ombudsman against Discrimination (DO), trade unions, employer organisations and tenant representatives to set up a joint task force to study, monitor and come up with proposals on how institutional discrimination in respective sectors could be tackled. One possible outcome could be, to have liaison officers sent into the field to identify, and, engage with those potential victims of discrimination and to encourage the latter to report incidences of injustices to the authorities concerned more frequently. Indeed, there are many unreported incidents, and hence, the need for these officers to become more proactive.

Secondly, the emphasis on immigrant integration should not entirely focus, or become primarily limited to, socio-economic integration such as the acquisition of Swedish language competence, education, employment and residential integration with mainstream society. Whilst these spheres are important, the emphasis on ways to ‘engage’ with peoples’ (immigrants’) ‘cultures’ and ‘religions’ should be given equal consideration. Until now, these latter phenomena have been relegated to the private domain. Policy makers have ‘pretended’

as though these spheres (cultural and religious ‘differences’) are non-existent. The ‘reality’ is, as this research has demonstrated, that ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ are central to the lives of minorities like Somalis. Their whole essence revolves round these two spheres. These two phenomena are also critical in determining the degree to which a group is accepted or rejected in Sweden.

It is the contention of this research that people’s cultural practices and religious beliefs are so decisive that, they often impact on outcomes (or indicators of integration) such as education, employment and housing. In the case of Somalis in Stockholm, this research has identified cases where Somalis ‘refused’ to take up certain jobs in the labour market out of their religious convictions, e.g., those that handled or processed certain animal products (see Chapter Five). This research has also identified the linkage between ‘individual preferences’ (or ‘self-segregation’), segregated suburbs, and the ‘cultural’ and ‘religious’ needs of Somalis. This relates to where Somalis are drawn to segregated suburbs because it is ‘only’ in those areas their religious and cultural needs (and those of their children) can be served or met.

This research does not suggest that ‘cultural integration’ or ‘assimilation’ should be the answer to eradicate the ‘integrative dilemmas’ encountered in the spheres of culture and religion. Rather, it suggests that policy makers should become aware of how peoples’ ‘cultures’ and ‘religions’ impact or influences their orientation towards the prevailing system of Swedish integration. By ‘including’ peoples’ ‘cultures’ and ‘religion’ into policy objectives,

policy makers could achieve an integrated, holistic approach to the question of immigrant integration. In practice, however, this may be difficult to implement given that ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ are contentious, and hence, problematic.

Thirdly, the over-emphasis on the ‘individual’ (e.g., individual rights, self-reliance, etc) in Swedish integration policy needs a review, especially, where a collectivist clan-based minority like that of Somalis is concerned. In such a community (at least in so far as first generation immigrants are concerned), the ‘individual’ cannot be divorced from his/her group since the two are closely interlinked and interdependent. Some modifications or at least understanding of how certain groups work, behave, etc, would be necessary. For the integration of groups like Somalis to be effective the ‘dilemma’ arising from the emphasis on the ‘individual’ as opposed to the ‘group’ has to be looked into.

Fourthly, there is a need for a debate on Swedish integration policy itself, which is egalitarian in orientation, and for good reasons. Should it be so egalitarian? Should it ‘overlook’ the real differences between individuals and groups in society, as it currently does? From this researcher’s viewpoint, there is a need to update existing policy so as to realise and respond to the different ‘realities’ individual immigrants and groups face in Sweden. There has to be a realisation that people do not ‘start from the same starting line’. The educated Hungarian and the uneducated Somali from a rural pastoralist background, for example, are treated the same by Swedish integration policy. The two would be expected to take the same ‘path’ of

integration and expected to do so at the same pace. It is clear that the educated Hungarian has of course many advantages over the uneducated rural Somali. S/he would gain quicker access to the socioeconomic and cultural life of the host society. S/he would not be constrained by the cultural and religious ‘baggage’ in the same way as the Somali (even educated Somalis, for that matter) does.

Fifthly, there is need to involve ‘native’ Swedes (private citizens) more fully in Swedish integration policy. Contemporary Swedish integration policy is often viewed as a top-down approach with little support or input from the population. Indeed, greater public support for Swedish integration policy could be invigorated through the dissemination of information about the plight of people coming into Sweden, and through their direct participation (volunteering, etc). Involving ‘native’ citizens as ‘co-owners’ of Swedish integration policy would make them more sympathetic and supportive of Swedish integration and multicultural policies than is the case today. ‘Shutting’ them out of the debate, and not bringing forth or accommodating them can have dire consequences. This was vividly demonstrated in the recent (September 2010) Swedish elections where the right wing Swedish Democratic Party’s (*Sverigedemokraterna*) anti-immigration campaign has struck a chord with a sizeable section of the electorate, enabling it for the first time to gain a parliamentary mandate in Sweden.

Moreover, Swedish integration policy should be based on a new, more comprehensible, premise and attainable goals in line with what ordinary citizens would like it to be. Authorities

should, for example, encourage forums in which representatives of immigrants and ‘native’ Swedes can be brought together to discuss and make joint recommendations to alleviate the situation of powerlessness among ‘native’ Swedes, who often feel their concerns and inputs are not addressed.

Last but not least, focus and resources should be directed towards integrating Somali youths into Swedish society. Future integration by Somalis would depend on their youngsters becoming embedded within the wider Swedish society. Young people are generally more receptive to the prevailing system of integration in Sweden. Their attitude towards the host society is more positive and forthcoming as they carry less cultural baggage than their parents in general. The acceptability by the host society would also be more likely with Somali youths once they ‘proved’ themselves in terms of positive educational and labour market outcomes.

10.8 Contribution to Knowledge

This research is among the first qualitative studies that explores the integration of Somali refugees into Swedish society. This study should thus be viewed as a pioneering piece of research that contributes to our understanding and knowledge about Somalis, a minority group that many in Sweden do not know much about, thanks partly to their relative short period of residency in Sweden, and partly because of their socio-economic and cultural ‘distance’ from ‘native’ Swedes. Moreover, because there is limited literature available on Somalis in Sweden,

this research does go some way in addressing the prevalent dearth of literature/knowledge about Somalis in Sweden.

Furthermore, in deploying and using extensive quotes from respondents, this research has given a voice to the voiceless. It brings forth the experiences, perceptions and meanings of people who are normally 'absent' from the deliberations of issues that directly affects their lives. As alluded to previously, Swedish integration policy is egalitarian in orientation, and hence, accords little or no attention to 'differences'. In line with the recommendations this research has put forward, it would, therefore, be important for policy makers to 'hear' people's voices and understand their 'psychology' in order to be effective in their roles as 'change' agents, and to bring about the positive change or outcome, not least in education, labour market, housing, etc., where Somalis are most disadvantaged.

This research also contributed to our methodological knowledge by pointing out that access by male researchers to Somali women is constrained by cultural and religious factors. This could also be viewed as a limitation of this research. Indeed, it is a knowledge that helps future researchers to be aware and one in which they could build upon or need to focus upon when dealing with Somalis. Female researchers wanting to engage with Somali male respondents would also find similar constraints.

As this research attests, all but two women (seven out of nine) interviewed were interviewed in their homes or premises of their choice (e.g., at a friend's and a relative's home, and often, in the residence of other women). Understandably, most Somali women interviewees objected to the idea of being interviewed in a restaurant. Presumably, many of these Somali women were 'uncomfortable' to be 'seen' together with other men, especially 'strangers' (such as a researcher) in public places. Many women may also have shied away from situations where other customers could overhear their conversations (i.e., interviews). The seemingly lack of confidence may partly be explained by the social control mechanisms inherent in Somali culture pertaining to gender relations (for more, see Chapter Nine). This research was thus obliged to negotiate access in a way that was 'acceptable' to the values of ('majority of') Somalis when access to interview Somali women was sought. Nonetheless, it was an issue that was not overcome as adequately as had been initially desired.

Another issue of cultural sensitivity pertaining to Somali women regarded their objection to tape-recorded. Many Somali women (six out of nine) refused their interviews to be tape-recorded. It was plausible that they would not let a stranger (a researcher) store their conversations. A onetime encounter was certainly not enough to accord a stranger that privilege. This is also what future researchers have to take onboard if they wish to undertake qualitative research involving Somali women.

Moreover, the fact that only nine out of twenty eight Somali respondents were women illustrates the difficulties of gaining access to Somali women (by a male researcher) relative to their male counterparts, who were not as culturally constrained.

Overall, the originality of this research lies with the raising of 'integrative' dilemmas facing Somalis in Sweden, particularly, as they relate to socio-economic (employment and education), cultural (including gender issues) and religious spheres of society. This may help policy makers to gain understanding and focus on these issues in their endeavour to help Somalis integrate into society. It is, however, for future researchers to focus on specific spheres (or particular 'integrative dilemma') in order to increase knowledge and help overcome the prevalent dearth of knowledge about the integration of Somalis in Sweden.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

A Note on 'Race' and 'Racism' in Sweden

It is important to note why there has not been an explicit emphasis on 'race', 'racism' and 'anti-racist' perspectives in this research. This does not imply that one cannot find examples of racist attitudes or behaviour in Swedish society. Indeed, 'institutional' forms of prejudice and discrimination are discussed in Chapter Seven. The absence of an explicit 'racist' discourse does not imply an uncritical acceptance of the assumption that Sweden is a nation 'without racism'. Rather, it reflects the difficulty of using a framework of this kind in a society in which race is seen as an inappropriate term of reference. Within Sweden and within Swedish literature inequalities in power tend to be viewed through the prism of ethnicity, class and gender rather than 'race', which is seen as a problematic or even inappropriate concept (see Sawyer, 2008; Mausoud, 2009; De los Reyes, 2001).

The term racism implies a 'hierarchy of superiority', based primarily on 'physical or innate hereditary characteristics and extended to cultural or religious characteristics' (see Mausoud, 2009:1). It is underpinned by the notion that non-European 'races' are inferior (Anthias, *et al.*, 1992:12). It is an ideology that seeks to secure that it is systematic, and involves 'the ability to impose' one's 'beliefs or worldview' as 'hegemonic' whilst at the same time 'denying others their basic rights and equality' (Yuval-Davis (1992:16, as cited in Masoud, 2009:1).

Racist ideology has bedeviled European history both in the past and in the present. It has been the basis for European colonial exploitation and slavery from the eighteenth century; it was the central ideology that triggered and sustained Nazism in Europe; and, in more recent years, has been used as a rationale for restricting non-European immigration into Europe and for exclusionary policies being adopted towards non-European ethnic groups already residing in Europe (Masoud, 2009:14).

In modern day Sweden it should be noted that the term 'race' is virtually a taboo. This reflects a common assumption that the term lacks validity, and that 'racist' attitudes and practices are rarely to be found. Few ever mention it or admit that it is prevalent in society though it does, interestingly, surface in the popular crime fiction of authors such as Mankel and Larsson. The term race is absent in day-to-day conversations and also in academic discourse where one might have expected more in-depth analysis of the 'term'; discussions of the 'phenomenon' itself, its prevalence and the measures to combat it in society (cf. Sawyer, 2008; Kamali, 2005; Molina, 1977; De los Reyes, 2001).

Indeed, Sweden comes across as a nation which has attempted to delete the concept of race (see Prep (2002), cited in Sawyer, 2008:90) from its vocabulary. Indeed, it is a 'self-image' that Sweden has tried 'hard to build' since World War Two. Sweden has prided itself on the notion that it is a nation built upon internationalism, humanism, solidarity and colour-blindness (Sawyer, 2008:90). This argument is strengthened by the fact that since 1945

Sweden has a ‘generous and liberal history of receiving and welcoming refugees’ (Diakité, 2006:3). Moreover, Sweden has always identified itself and actively supported, both morally and materially, international struggles for freedom and justice. For example, Sweden was in the vanguard of the opposition towards the war in Vietnam, and in challenging apartheid in South Africa. Furthermore, the contemporary ‘self-image’ of Sweden can be linked to its unique welfare model and its concept of the peoples’ home (*folkhemmet*) – a social engineered society based on equality, participation and belongingness that is said to be the hallmark of the good family. Accordingly, race and racism had no place in modern Sweden.

By cultivating this ‘self-image’ of being ‘a place without race’ Sweden has tended to view ‘race’ and ‘racism’ as something applicable to countries other than their own, e.g., the UK, USA, Australia, France, Germany, Eastern European countries, etc., (cf. Sawyer, 2008). As a consequence, those forms of ‘racist’ behavior that are to be found within Sweden have tended to be attributed to the actions of individuals or small groups (e.g., skinheads and extremists) on the fringes of society –, or to borrow from Lentin (2004:427), as ‘something’ that is typically described as ‘an individual problem’, that has been allowed to manifest itself because of inappropriate socialization or psychological disturbance.

This positive self image of a non-racist society can mean that racist activities are unrecognized or under-reported. Certainly, there are a number of examples of what could be described as overtly ‘racist activities’ in Swedish society. These include the rise of explicitly anti-

immigration rhetoric and violence (Sawyer, 2008); the tendency to still describe second generation immigrants as “immigrants” rather than Swedish citizens and, the ‘fact that many institutions’ (e.g., the civil service, universities, etc) ‘remain extremely ethnically homogeneous’ (Diakité, 2006:3-6). The emergence of populist, racist parties (most recently, the Swedish Democratic Party ,or *Sverigedemokraterna*, which has managed to scoop a sizeable electoral vote enabling it to break through the 4% threshold necessary to win parliamentary representation for the first time, in 2010) also indicates that ‘racism’ may be on the rise in Sweden. Moreover, there are clear examples of ‘racist’ policies even in Sweden’s recent history. The infamous Racial Hygiene Institute (established in 1922) oversaw the sterilisation of 60,000 Swede between 1935 - 1974 because they were deemed ‘undesirable’, ‘insufficient’ and ‘deviant’ (Geddes, 2003:120; see Amstrong, 1997; Lennerhed, 1997).

There is little in the form of explicitly anti-racist legislation in Sweden. As Diakité (2006:6) argues, there are few ‘anti-racist’ clauses in major Swedish policy areas, e.g., in education, labour market, housing, etc. There are no independent monitoring systems of recruitment practices in for example the civil service or other public agencies which might highlight discriminatory practice (see Diakité, 2006:6). This can be contrasted to the UK for example , where, as Lentin (2004:427) confirms, anti-racism is a dominant discourse: where the subject of ‘racism’ is extensively studied in academic circles; where equal opportunity rights are emphasized and are an integral part in UK public institutions, in their dealings with members of ethnic minorities groups; and where ‘race’ and ‘racism’ are frequently deliberated in British

media and political circles. Masoud (2009:56) attributes the latter to UK's 'long' and 'proactive anti-racist tradition'.

The absence of anti-racist legislation in Sweden is linked to the following. First, given that 'egalitarianism' is such a key principle within Swedish society it is thought that 'no racial problems' can exist and that there is no need for anti-racist legislation. Second, there is a fear that any anti-racist legislation that might be enacted runs the risk of favouring one group over another, thereby undermining the egalitarian and universal underpinning of Swedish society. The latter can be illustrated by the sensitivity surrounding suggestions that affirmative action might be needed to increase the participation of ethnically disadvantaged groups in Sweden, which would contravene a basic Swedish law (SFS2003:307), that prohibits ethnic and other forms of discrimination in employment (Diakité, 2006:5).

Finally, the lack of an explicitly race oriented framework in this thesis is not intended to suggest that there is no racism in Swedish society. Rather, it is a reflection of the fact that it does not surface in an explicit way. Certainly, neither my Somalian respondents nor the Swedish officials referred to racism (with a few exceptions) explicitly in their interviews or believed it was a key factor in everyday interactions. However, it should be noted that attention was drawn where appropriate to forms of 'discriminatory' practice that could be construed as having racial' undertones (see Chapter Seven).

Appendix 2

Rinkeby and Tensta as shown in the Old Administrative Map of Stockholm



Source: http://www2.humangeo.su.se/kartografi/kg1/ovn4_text.htm, Date accessed 10/10/08

Appendix 3

Consent Form

CONSENT FORM		Date:	
	YES	NO	
1. Have you read the information about this research outlining research aims, research questions, methods to be used as well as its overall plan?			
2. Have you received enough information about the study to decide whether you want to take part?			
3. Do you understand that you are free to refuse to answer any question?			
4. Do you understand that you may withdraw from the study at any given time without giving your reasons?			
5. Do you know that the researcher will treat all information as confidential?			
6. Do you agree to take part in the study?			
Signature: _____ Name: _____			
I confirm that quotations from the interview can be used in the final research report and other publications. I understand that these will be used anonymously			
Signature: _____ Name: _____			

Courtesy: Arksey & Knight (1999:131)

Appendix 4

Ethical Considerations

The researcher took ethical considerations into account when conducting this research. The researcher was aware that he was dealing with people. He was thus sensitive of their rights, concerns and feelings, at all time. As a matter of rule, the researcher always started by providing a full explanation of the research to help individuals make an informed decision. In addition, as a way to allay some of the ‘fears’ (suspicion, etc) respondents may have towards the research, the researcher always reassured respondents that their identities would be protected. Accordingly, all the names of the respondents in this research had to be fictitious. Thus, all efforts were made by ensuring that respondents could not be identifiable ‘by others’ from the stories they shared with the researcher.

The researcher drew inspiration from Arksey & Knights’ (1999:129-130) ‘ethical checklist’ by ensuring that the respondents were aware of the following:

1. The purpose and the nature of study, including the research methods and timing.
2. The anticipated benefits, risk or costs (for those taking part in the study, and also the wider society).
3. Contact details of the researcher, and the research base.
4. The sort of questions being asked, and how long the interview should take.

5. The right of not answering specific questions, or of changing their mind by withdrawing from the research altogether.
6. The degree of anonymity and confidentiality; what information will be disclosed, for what purposes and to whom; and, the use of quotations.
7. Arrangement to safeguard confidentiality.

The researcher also drew heavily from the ‘codes of ethics and ethical guidelines’ provided by two professional associations to their members, namely, the Social Research Association (SRA) and the British Sociological Association (BSA). For more, refer to their respective websites: (<http://www.the-sra.org.uk>) and (<http://www.brisoc.org.uk>).

Specific Steps

The ethical issues considered by this researcher in the course of doing this research included:

- Voluntary and informed consent
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Detrimental harm
- Power relationship
- The relevant Swedish legislation.

We explore these in more details.

Voluntary and Informed Consent:

It was important that all respondents understood the process that the researcher requested them to engage. The researcher explained the research both in verbal and written form. This explanation covered the nature and the overall plan of the research, the purpose of research, the research methods, as well as the consequences and risks the research might entail. The researcher made it clear to respondents that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from their participation at any time.

The respondents were requested to sign a voluntary consent form to ensure that they were happy with the information they received about the research; that they were aware of their rights, and were able to confirm that they wished to be involved in the process they were asked to engage in (cf. Arksey & Knight, 1999:131).

The researcher conducted all but four of the interviews with individual Somali respondents in Somali (of those four, three were conducted in English and one in Swedish). The researcher also conducted the focus group meeting in Somali. The reason was because most respondents felt comfortable in conversing in Somali rather than in English or Swedish. The latter were

considered as inhibitive. It was the researcher hope, therefore, that the use of Somali language eliminated the possibility for misunderstanding and misinterpretation that would otherwise have arisen if interviews with Somali respondents were conducted in English or Swedish.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

As a qualified social worker with several years experience of work experience, the researcher was well aware of the importance of upholding confidentiality (as demanded, often by the law). Accordingly, the researcher ensured the anonymity and privacy of respondents were respected; and, that personal information concerning respondents was kept confidential. As noted previously, one method of ensuring anonymity was the use of fictitious names for all respondents.

Detrimental Harm:

The researcher aimed to protect respondents from undue harm as a result of their participation in this research. In line with research ethical principles, the respondents of this research were not subjected to any deliberate harm. No undue psychological pressure was exerted at any time. On the contrary respondents were made to feel ‘comfortable’ prior to, in the course of, and, after the interviews. Their informed consent was always sought in advance; there were no

intrusive questions; and, respondents were not deceived overtly or covertly to ensure they participates in the research.

Power Relationship:

The researcher was aware of disparities in power and status between him and some respondents, especially, Somali women. The researcher aimed from the outset to cultivate mutual trust and integrity with all respondents. All respondents were, for example, encouraged to speak out of any uneasiness with the research, the types of questions asked, the way the questions were put to them, the rendezvous, etc. The researcher conveyed an impression that he was ‘equal’ (in status) to the respondents both in his tone of language and deeds.

As a ‘fellow Somali’, the researcher could only speculate that Somali respondents regarded him as an ‘insider’ and therefore less intimidating. Nonetheless, the researcher was also fully aware of the importance of maintaining his ‘distance’ in order to portray a sense of objectivity. The researcher thus attempted to strike the right balance, knowing when to ‘appear’ ‘friendly’ and when to withdraw.

The Relevant Swedish Legislation:

In Sweden ethical vetting is required if the research involves human beings. The aim of the ‘*Act concerning the Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans (2003:460)*’ is to protect individuals and human dignity when conducting research. In particular, sections 3-4 of the Act (2003:460), stipulates that researchers working in following areas must seek ethical vetting in Sweden:

1. Sensitive personal data as defined by section 13 of the Personal data act (1998:204).
2. Personal data concerning offences against the law including crimes, judgements in criminal cases, coercive penal procedural measures or administrative deprivation of liberty as defined in section 21 of the Personal Data Act.
3. Physical intervention affecting a person who is participating in the research.
4. Research that is conducted in accordance with a method intended to physically or mentally influence a person who is participating in the research.
5. Studies that concern biological material that has been taken from a living person and that can be traced back to that person.
6. Research that involves physical intervention upon a deceased person.
7. Research that pertains to biological material that has been taken for medical purposes from a deceased person and can be traced back to that person.

Source: [http://www.epn.se/start/regulations/the-act-\(2003460\).aspx](http://www.epn.se/start/regulations/the-act-(2003460).aspx), Date accessed 12/06/06

This Research

This researcher was not required to adhere to the above in order to conduct his research. Indeed, the researcher contacted a member of the Ethics Committee in Stockholm, Sweden – someone knowledgeable about the ethical process in Sweden. The researcher was informed by this person that in his opinion an ethical review was not necessary in the case of this research, as long as, an ‘informed consent’ was sought from, and granted, by the subjects (respondents) of research.

Appendix 5

Aide Mémoire

- Migration and resettlement
- Integration
- Formal contact/cordiality with Swedish officials
- Language and communicative competence
- Education
- Work
- Area/place of domicile
- Social network
- Interaction with native Swedes/ Social connectivity with members of the Swedish community
- Residential segregation
- Service provision in the neighbourhood, e.g., education, health, and, housing
- Perception of ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and racism (including institutional racism)
- Cultural arena
- Negative fame (*prompted* for issues such as stigmatisation /stereotyping/ unfavourable characterizations)
- Portrayal in media and political discourse
- Gender (bone of contention; empowerment; changing roles, etc)

- Youth (embody the future)

Appendix 6

The New Administrative Map of Stockholm (see Skärholmen; Kungsholmen, Norrmalm and Södermalm).



Source: SCB/USK, 2008.

Appendix 7

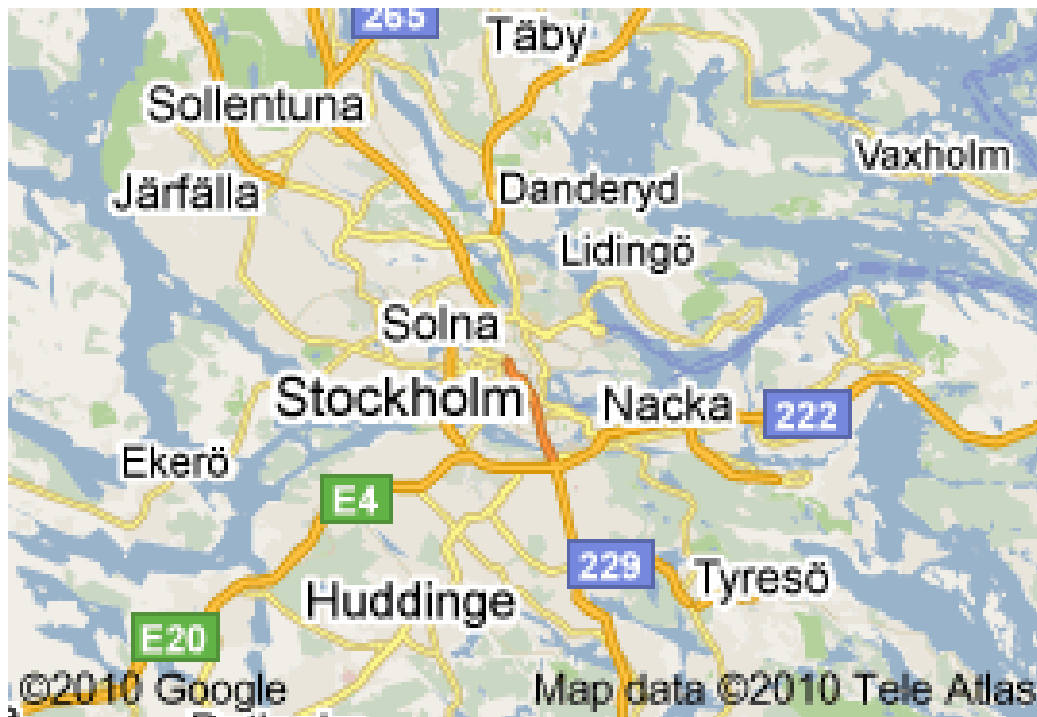
A Map showing the Location of Märsta



Source: <http://www.weather-forecast.com/locationmaps/marsta3.8.jpg>, Date accessed (17/11/10).

Appendix 8

Some Communes (including Solna) in Greater Stockholm



Source: <http://www.google.co.uk/search?hl=en&q=map+of+stockholm&um>,

Appendix 9

Map of Sweden



Source: <http://www.travelblog.org/Europe/Sweden/map-of-sweden.html>, Date accessed (10/10/08).

Appendix 10

Swedish 'Official' Respondents

NAME	SEX	ORGANISATION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES
Björn	M	Rinkeby Social District	Employment advisor (Labour Market Section, Adult Services).
Elisabet	F	Migration Office	An Immigration Officer. Had previously worked as a social worker in Rinkeby.
Eriksson	M	Märsta Commune/ Social District	Social Worker, Social Assistance [Economic] Section.
Eva	F	Rinkeby Social District	Youth Employment Advisor. Liaisons closely with the local Employment Exchange Office.
Göran	M	Rinkeby Social District	Refugee Coordinator. Responsible for the 'introduction' of newcomers.
Helena	F	Migration Office	Immigration Officer. Had previously worked as a social worker in Rinkeby.
Maria	F	Rinkeby Social District	Coordinates literacy courses for refugees.
Mona	F	Rinkeby Social District	Social Worker, Social Assistance [Economic] Section.
Oskarsson	M	Swedish Integration Office	Ethnic Associations' Liaison Officer
Sara	F	Skärholmen Social District	Social Worker, Assessment and Referral Section, Adult Services.

Appendix 11

Crime Statistics: Comparison between City of Stockholm and Rinkeby-Kista (2007). No/1000.

Type of Crime	City of Stockholm		Rinkeby – Kista Area	
	Number/incidence	Number./1000	Number/incidence	Number./1000
Crime against life & health	10 942	13,8	657	14,5
Outdoors	6 016	7,6	311	6,8
Indoors	4 926	6,2	346	7,6
Crime against liberty and peace	11 604	14,6	1 026	22,6
Threat	5 822	7,3	549	12,1
Molestation	4 354	5,5	372	8,2
‘Disturbing the Peace’	1 428	1,8	105	2,3
Sexual offenses	947	1,2	59	1,3
Exhibitionist	131	0,2	8	0,2
Sexual molestation	556	0,7	29	0,6
Rape	260	0,3	22	0,5
Property crime	17 963	33,5	1 367	30,1

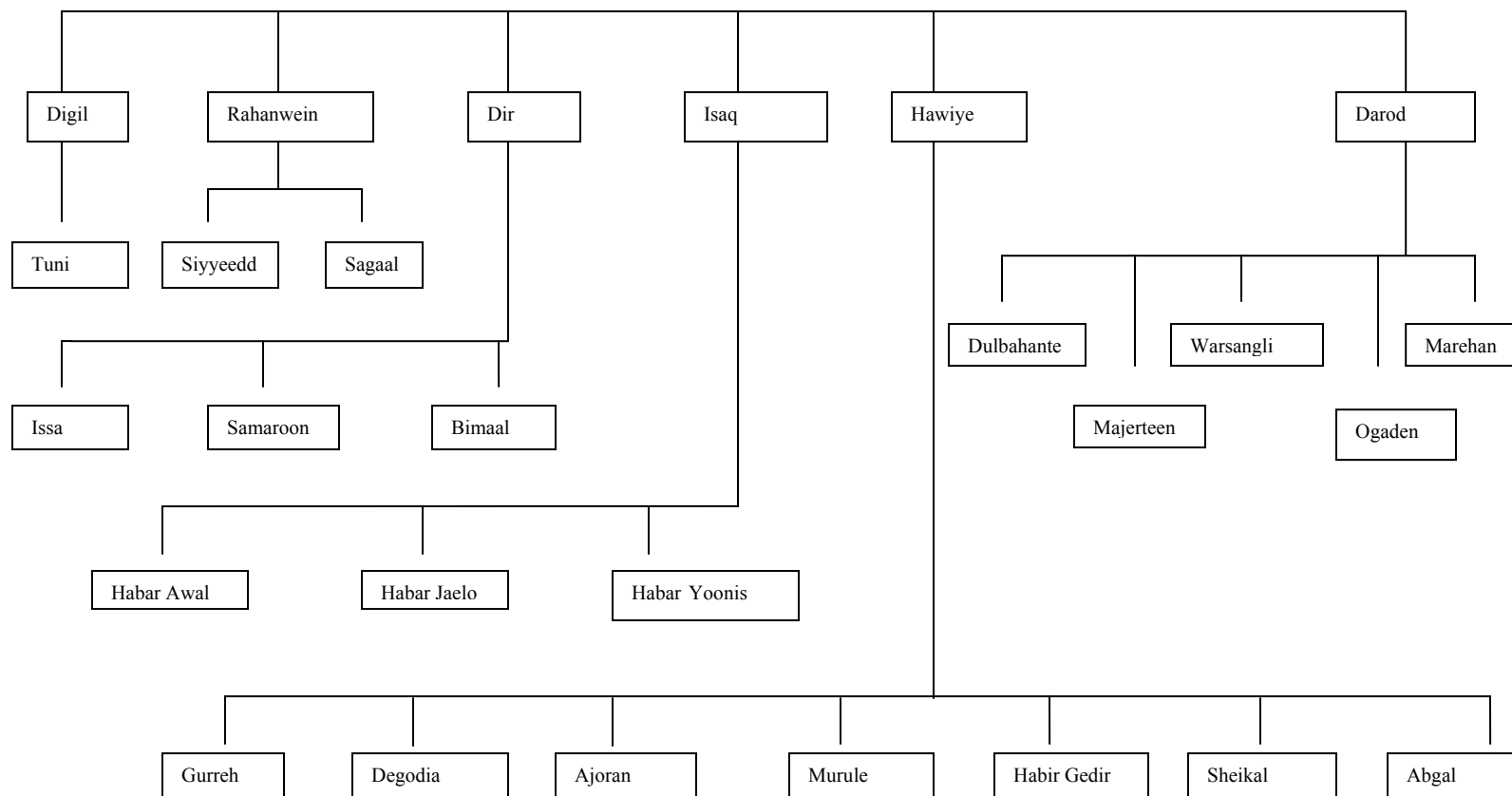
Theft of vehicles	9 549	12,1	471	10,4
Burglary	3 977	5	302	6,6
‘Stealing from a person’	8 366	10,6	231	5,1
‘Stealing from a shop’	178	0,2	14	0,3
‘Robbing from a person’	733	0,9	66	1,5
Other property crime	3 704	4,7	283	6,2
Damages	29 912	37,9	1 926	42,4
Graffiti	15 642	19,8	761	16,7
‘Other’ Damages	14 270	18,1	1 165	25,6
Drugs	11 284	14,2	627	13,8
Total	82 652	115,3	5 662	124,5

Source: www.stockholm.se/PageFiles/119380/Rinkeby-Kista.pdf, Date accessed 11/10/2009.

Translated from Swedish by the Author.

Appendix 12

Somali Clan Chart



Source: Developed as part of this Study.

Appendix 13

‘Specific Global Incidents’: Cited Examples

The following examples were cited by Swedish ‘official’ respondents as ‘global incidents’ that ‘inflamed’ relations between Muslims and the West. They include the Rushdie Affairs, the slaying of Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands, the Danish Cartoons depicting Prophet Mohamed, as well as Sweden’s own Lars Vilks, who also depicted the Prophet.

The Rushdie Affairs followed the publication of his book the *Satanic Verses* in 1988 in which the prophet of Islam, Mohamed and his members of family were portrayed in ‘a postmodern satirical style’ (Slaughter, 1993: 153). The *Satanic Verses* was construed by Muslims to mean the *Quran*, which is blasphemous in Islam. The controversies (including riots in many parts of the world) surrounding the publication of the *Satanic Verses* culminated in a *Fatwa* or ‘religious sentence’ by the late Ayatullah Khomeini of Iran calling on all Muslims to kill the author, Salman Rushdie, a Brit of Indian origin (Chakravorty, 1995:2216)

In the Netherlands, Theo Van Gogh a filmmaker was murdered by a man of Moroccan origins for making his controversial film, *Submission*, which was highly critical about the position and treatment of women in Islamic societies. Theo Van Gogh collaborated with Ayaan Hersi Ali, a

Somali-born former Dutch parliamentarian who is herself highly critical of Islam. What inflamed Muslim sensibility about the film was that it used verses of the *Quran* against the background of a 'half-naked woman' (see Brockes, the Guardian, 08/05/2010).

A third example that surfaced at the time of the interviews (with research respondents) but whose controversy took months to ferment before it developed into a major global incident was that of the so called Mohamed's caricatures in which the Danish newspaper *Jylland-Posten (JP)* published twelve cartoons by Cartoonist Kurt Westergaard who depicted Prophet Mohamed, with, among others, a bomb in his turbine to insinuate the terrorist association with Muslims (see, Ziebertz, & Riegel, 2008). The newspaper justified its publication as a means to contribute to the debate pertaining to the criticism of Islam and to demonstrate the self-imposed, self-sponsorship in the press in matters regarding Islam. These publications caused a storm in many Muslim countries and in some case led to the loss of lives and properties, as a consequence.

Sweden's own controversy came when Lars Vilks, a Swedish cartoonist depicted the Prophet Mohamed as roundabout dog. Lars' cartoon was first published by Örebro based newspaper *Nerikes Allehanda (NA)* and latter by other newspaper in solidarity with Lars and the editor of *NA*, when the latter received death threats. Nonetheless, although the Lars' drawing did created some demonstrations, their scope and effects were muted in comparison to those triggered by the Danish Cartoonist, Kurt Westergaard.

Appendix 14

The Somali Research Respondents

Name	Age	Sex	Duration in Sweden *	Education		Current Work Status: Eᄁ. (P/T;F/T) Temp. Uᄁᄁ	No. of Years of economic 'Inactivity' **
				Somalia	Sweden		
Abdiwahid	33	M	15	Sec. Ed.	Univ. student	S	2
Abdirashid	51	M	30	Sec. Ed.	Bsc. (Comp. sci).	E (F/T)	2
Hanan	42	M	15	Bsc. (Nat.Sci.)	Msc..(Pol. & Deci.).	E (F/T)	5
Muktar	44	M	14½	None	None	E (Temp)	8
Mariam	30	F	9½	Pri. Ed.	Nurs. aux. ass't.	E (F/T)	5
Awer	42	M	18	Sec. Ed.	BEng.	E (F/T)	7
Diriye	40	M	13	Pri. Ed.	None	E (F/T)	8
Hirab	55	M	16½	LLB	NDC	P/E (F/T)	13
Anab	33	F	15½	Pri. Ed.	None	E (Temp)	9
Hassan	37	M	16	Sec. Ed.	BSET	E (F/T)	1½
Jelle	53	M	16	Pri. Ed.	None	E (F/T)	2
Ahmed	42	M	13	Sec. Ed.	NDC	E (Temp)	7
Isir	32	F	10	Pri. Ed.	Nurs. aux. ass't.	E (Temp)	5
Abshir	40	M	13½	Sec. Ed.	Ms.(Eco.)	U	10

Adow	22	M	4	None	None	U	4
Bashir	35	M	15	Sec. Ed.	None	U	9
Amin	36	M	13	Post. Sec. Ed.	Bsc. (Eco).	E (F/T)	5
Farhiya	43	F	5	None	None	U	5
Barni	36	F	10	None	None	U	10
Safia	23	F	3	Pri. Ed.	None	U	3
Iman	25	F	7	Pri. Ed.	None	U	6
Rukiya	29	F	13	Pri. Ed.	None	U	10
Abdirizak	33	M	15	Pri. Ed.	Bsc. (Eco.)	U	2
Saadia	19	F	12	N/A	Sec. Edu.	S	1
Fanan	45	M	13	None	None	U	12
Irshad	41	M	10	Sec. Ed	NDC	P/E (F/T)	4
Khalif	37	M	14	Pri. Ed.	None	U	12
Fawz	38	M	15	Sec. Ed.	Degree. Med&Com.	E (F/T)	2

Key

- * Duration in Sweden at the Time of Interviews
- ** No. of Years of Economic 'Inactivity' (i.e., not in studies, training or employment)
- E□ Employed
- F/T (Full-time employment)
- P/E Project Employed
- Temp. Temporary Work

S	Student
Uαα	Unemployed
Bsc.	Bachelor of Science
Msc.	Masters of Science
Comp. sci.	Computer Science
Sec. Ed.	Secondary Education Level
Nat. Sci.	Natural Science
NDC	None Degree Courses
Pol. & Deci.	Policy & Decision
Pri. Ed.	Primary Education Level
BSET	Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology
LLB	Bachelor of Law
Med&Com.	Media & Communication
Eco.	Economics
Post.Sec.Ed.	Uncompleted University Education

Appendix 15

The Focus Group Participants

Name*	'Responsibility'
Abdi	Project Leader
Ahmed	Interpreter
Ali	'Integration' Consultant
Mohamed	Teacher
Osman	'Community Elder'
Roble	'Businessman'
Siad	'Community Elder'
Yussuf	Home Language Instructor

*All male.

Appendix 16

Interview Schedule I (with Somali respondents)

Introduction

Before interviews started a full explanation of what the research was all about was given. The purpose of the research was also explained. Respondents were informed that the interviews would last for about 1 hour, but that it could also extend the allotted time if the researcher and the interviewee deemed that necessary. However, that could only occur if it was mutually agreed.

The researcher emphasised that this was an independent research project, and hence, the information respondents shared with the researcher would be used as part of his study.

Respondents were required to sign a ‘consent form’, after their voluntary and informed consent was secured. The respondents were under no obligation to answer all the interview questions, and, were informed of their rights to withdraw from the interviews if they wished.

Interview Topics

Demographics:

1. Sex:
2. Name: (The names of respondents was to change in order to protect their real identities)
3. Age:

Migration and resettlement:

1. What prompted you to migrate to Sweden?
2. Could you tell me about your experience when you first arrived in Sweden?
3. How long have been in Sweden, now?
4. What is your current ‘immigration’ status [permanent residency/citizen]?

Integration:

1. What does the term 'integration' mean to you?
2. What is your perception about your own integration in Sweden?
3. What has worked/not worked for you?
4. What about your perception of the integration of Somalis in Sweden?
5. What has worked in terms of the integration of Somalis? What has not worked?

Language:

1. What can you tell me about your competence in your Swedish language?
2. What has Swedish language meant particularly for you?
3. In your opinion, what does Swedish language mean for refugees/immigrants in Sweden?
4. Can you share with me, your assessment about the competence of Somalis regarding their general competence in Swedish language?

Education:

1. Tell me in general terms, the importance of education for you.
2. What was your educational attainment prior to your arrival in Swedish?
3. Did you feel the need to supplement your previous education, or, 're-educate' yourself in Sweden?
4. What educational level have you attained in Sweden?

[Prompt: whether education from homeland is valued and whether new education/skills attained in Sweden have made a significant difference to the individual]

5. What can you say about Somalis and their educational levels in Sweden?

Employment (Labour Market):

1. What is your current employment status? *[Employed/unemployed]*
2. If employed, what is your status? *[Permanent/temporary/full-time/part-time]*
3. What skill/job experience have you had prior to your arrival Sweden?
4. What skill/job experience have you attained in Sweden?
5. Following up on what said earlier about you work, are you satisfied with your current employment status?
6. Could you briefly give me a general assessment about your employment history in Sweden?
7. Tell me whether you experienced periods of unemployment/when you were out of paid employment.
8. If so, why do you think you were unemployed?
9. How easy/difficult was it for you to get employment/re-employment in Sweden?
10. What are you experience of seeking employment in Sweden?

[Prompt: for qualifications, training, recognition of skills/work experience/whether an applicant was under-employed, etc].

Area/place of Residence:

1. Prior to the granting of your permanent status... did you have the experience of living in a refugee reception centre?
2. If yes, what can you say about your experience in that centre?

3. How long did you spend in the centre before you were granted permission to stay in Sweden?
4. Did you have the experience of living in communes outside Stockholm when you received your residence permit?
5. Tell me about your experiences in that/those commune(s). How were they different from your experiences in Stockholm or your current suburb?
6. How long did you live that/those commune(s) before you moved to Stockholm?
7. What prompted you to move to Stockholm?

Current Residence/Suburb:

1. Where, or in which suburb, do you currently live?
2. What was/were your reason(s) for moving into this particular suburb?
3. What can you say are the 'pros' and 'cons' of living in your suburb?
4. Do you consider 'your' suburb as a segregated suburb?
5. If so, would you like to move to a less segregated suburb?
6. If, yes what do you think is preventing you from doing so?
7. If you prefer this suburb, tell me the reasons why?
8. What can you tell me about service such as schools, health, environment, etc, in 'your' current suburb?
[Prompt for the 'problems' encountered in living in segregated suburbs]

Social Networks:

Social Networks among Somalis:

1. Could you tell about whether you belong to any Somali organization.
2. Do you have Somali friends?
3. Tell me a little about the intensity of contact with your friends.
4. Do you have relatives in 'your' suburb?
5. Tell me about your contact with your neighbours.

[Prompt about: how friendly/ supportive/ neighbours/relatives were]

6. What do have you to say about the 'concentration' of Somalis/immigrants in 'your' suburb? *[Prompt why problems encountered in these suburbs?]*

Interaction/Connectivity with 'native' Swedes:

1. Do you live in a shared neighbourhood [where the proportions of Swedes are higher or slightly higher than those of immigrants]?
2. Tell me about your experience in a 'shared' neighbourhood?
3. If no, do you have 'native' Swedish neighbours in 'your' current suburb?
4. Do you have 'native Swedish network' (friends, work colleagues, etc) that you interact with on regular basis?
5. If no, what do you think are the reasons?

Perception of Ethnic discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism in Sweden:

1. Have you experienced discrimination, racism or any form of unfavourable treatment in Sweden?
2. If yes, let's talk a little more about your own experiences in the following:
 - (a) Public places (workplaces, public institutions, etc)
 - (b) Private places (street, homes, neighbourhood, etc)
3. In your opinion, why do you think you encountered discrimination/racism/xenophobia?
[Prompt. Why and how the respondents felt about the above mentioned phenomena].

Cultural Arena:

1. What can you say about the perceived cultural differences between Somalis and Swedes?
2. Are there areas where you can say Somali culture is 'at odds' with Swedish culture or way of life?
3. Can you elaborate on the examples you have just mentioned?
4. How have you coped with these 'cultural differences'?
5. How important is individual adaptability to Swedish way of life important to you?
6. Have you felt compelled to conform to Swedish way of life in order to 'integrate'?
7. Does conformity or non-conformity to Swedish way of life affect one's ability to obtain education or employment in Sweden?
8. Can you freely practice your culture or way of life without making anyone uncomfortable?
9. Religion (Islam): How is your religion perceived in Sweden?
10. How does the Swedish media portray Islam, in general terms?

End of Interview.

Appendix 17

Interview Schedule II (with ‘Swedish Official’ respondents)

Introduction

Before the interviews started, the researcher introduced himself and his research (purpose, aims, methods, etc). A ‘consent form’ was then signed after an informed and voluntary consent was secured from the respondent. The researcher wanted the following ‘part instructive’/ ‘part informative’ ‘items’ to come across before an interview started.

- Many questions/statements in the areas/topics to be covered were based on the subjective interpretation of the Somali respondents.
- Many of the accounts that we are about to be explored border on what may be viewed as ‘gross generalisation’.
- You need not be ‘politically correct’ – [having secured the ‘official’s’ consent, and having assured that utmost confidentiality would be respected].
- Many of these questions will be in the form of statements, and, you would be requested to comment.
- Many of the questions could simply be answered by ‘no’ and ‘yes’, but you would be requested to elaborate upon.
- Some questions may be outside your specific area of duty or responsibility. In that case, you are under no obligation to answer them. However, you are free to give a try where possible.
- Finally, I would like you to know that I am no ‘expert’, and that it would be ‘us’ together – I the researcher and you, the ‘respondent’ – who would attempt to construct what could be regarded as the ‘accurate’ situation/reality of Somalis in Stockholm/Sweden.

Interview Topics

Language and Education:

1. Do Somalis have a relatively good command of the Swedish language?
2. Do many Somalis lack education or have ‘unsuitable’ education in Sweden?
3. Do many Somalis lack ‘appropriate’ skill to function in Sweden?
4. Do you think there is widespread ‘illiteracy’ amongst Somalis in Stockholm/Sweden?
5. What can you say about Swedish Instruction for Immigrants (*SFI*)?

Qualifications:

1. Previous qualification (e.g., from Somalia) are not ‘valued’ in Sweden.
2. Somalis/immigrants are less likely to obtain jobs commensurate with their qualifications.
3. Even those [Somalis/immigrants] with Swedish qualifications are met with scepticism. Do you agree? If so, why?

Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMP):

1. How would you characterise the attitude of Somalis towards activation programmes?
2. There is a perception among some Somali respondents that that:
 - (a) activation programmes have become the substitute to ‘real’ work (i.e., in the absence of work), and, that,

(b) after a while people become tired (or less enthusiastic) of them. Do you agree?

Labour Market/Work:

1. Long-term unemployment is prevalent in the Somali community of Sweden. Do you agree?
2. Do you believe in the premises that there is 'no integration without work' [i.e., gainful employment]?
3. How has mass unemployment amongst Somalis affected their reputation/image in Sweden?
4. Would you support affirmative action such as a quota system in which Somalis are guaranteed positions in employment and places in education in Sweden? Why?
5. Has the labour market situation for Somalis improved in the last five or so years?

Integration:

1. Do you believe Somalis have difficulties in integrating themselves into Swedish society? Why? [Who is to blame?].
2. Do 'native' Swedes consider Somalis as 'part' of the wider Swedish society?
3. Do Somalis feel that they are 'part' of the wider Swedish society?
4. Do you think Somalis and their 'problems' in Sweden, 'stick out'?
5. Somalis tend to keep to themselves. Is this counterproductive to their socio-economic integration in Sweden? What would you advise them to do in this respect?

6. Many Somalis are not willing to adapt. Do you agree? If so why?
7. Do you think Somalis will adapt over time?
8. Would you prefer for Somalis to 'assimilate' in Swedish society so as to eliminate cultural differences with 'native' Swedes?

Motivation:

1. Are Somalis motivated to integrate themselves into mainstream Swedish society? Why/how?
2. What can you say about Somalis' own determination to change their present predicament in Sweden?

Stability:

1. Majority of Somalis do not 'feel at home' in Sweden. Do you agree?
2. Somalis are likely to relocate to other countries (notably UK) that they perceive is relatively more open and tolerant to Somali way of life. Are you aware of such a relocation/trend? What is your opinion?

Housing:

1. Do you think many Somalis have moved to Stockholm on their own volition and against the advice of officials?
2. Does the concentration of Somalis in a few suburbs in Stockholm present a problem to their integration?
3. Do you think Somalis are compelled (by reasons such as income, etc) to stay in suburbs dominated by immigrants, or may this be due their own preferences/choices?

4. Housing corporations/agents are more likely to allocate apartments to Somalis in suburbs with a predominant immigrant population than members of the host community.

‘Native’ Connectivity/interaction:

1. The interaction between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes is limited.
 - a) Do you think this is because Somalis want to maintain their ‘distance’?
 - b) Or, is this because ‘native’ Swedes are unwilling to ‘let’ Somalis ‘in’?

‘Official’/‘Formal’ Contacts:

1. Do you think Somalis present ‘special problems/difficulties’ for Swedish authorities?
2. Do you think the information... counsel you give to members of the Somali community you come into contact are well received or ‘digested’ accordingly?
3. Earlier encounters between Somalis and Swedish authorities were characterised by misunderstanding and lack of trust.
4. Do you think Somalis have more (formal) contact with officials and less (informal) contact with members of the host society? If yes, why do you think that is the case?
5. There is an excessive scrutiny and control from authorities regarding Somalis.
6. Officials are perceived as ‘partial’ rather than ‘impartial’ when they [officials] intervene in familial/marital disputes among Somalis.
7. Many Somali male respondents were of the view that officials often ‘side’ with women in the event of marital disputes.

Multiculturalism:

1. Is Sweden a multicultural society?
2. How well has Sweden managed multiculturalism/diversity of cultures?
3. Do you think many 'native' Swedes perceive other cultures 'threatening'?
4. Do you think 'differences' in cultures are acknowledged in Sweden?
5. Do you think Somalis have difficulties in expressing the cultural and religious rights in Sweden?
6. The Swedish society is still a homogeneous society despite its outward attempt to project itself as a heterogeneous multiethnic, multicultural society.

The Swedish Integration Policy:

1. What can you say about Swedish Integration Policy
2. Is there mutual understanding/mutual respect between Somalis and the native Swedish population?
3. One often talks of a two-way traffic, regarding the objectives of Swedish integration policy. Does this apply to Somalis in Sweden?
4. The latent objective of Swedish integration policy is to assimilate immigrants and not to integrate them. Comment.

The Swedish System:

1. What is meant by 'Swedish system'?
2. Have Somalis come to a system 'alien' to them?
3. Do many Somalis lack knowledge about the 'Swedish system' and how it functions?
4. Do you think Somalis find the 'Swedish system' 'oppressive'?
5. The Swedish welfare system makes immigrants (including Somalis) passive.

Passivity/Dependency:

1. Do Somalis come across as a community that is 'passive' in Sweden?
2. Somalis are more likely to live on social assistance and other benefits (e.g., unemployment benefits) than 'native' Swedes or other more established immigrant groups.
3. There is a connection between living off social assistance and long-term unemployment among Somalis in Sweden.

Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism:

1. Swedes are generally 'fearful' of the unknown [i.e., newcomers].
2. There is ethnic discrimination in Sweden.
3. Are Somalis ethnically discriminated?

4. Swedish employers/ prospective employers subject Somalis to what may amount to ethnic discrimination.
5. Institutional racism exists in Sweden.
6. Xenophobia is prevalent in Sweden.
7. Somalis bear the brunt of racism and xenophobia in Sweden.
8. Somalis use 'discrimination and racism' as a mere 'pretext'.

Culture:

1. Somalis 'deviate' markedly from what is considered as Swedish cultural norms and standard.
2. The Somali culture represents an old traditional pattern which is incompatible with Swedish way of life.
3. Many Somalis are bent on retaining their original culture (and resist [positive] influences from the native Swedish cultures).
4. Somali culture comes across as being 'rigid'.

Societal Codes:

1. Somalis have no clear understanding about Swedish culture and Swedish cultural codes.
2. How important is the internalisation of 'Swedish cultural codes' by Somalis in order to integrate into mainstream society?

Religion:

1. Many in the 'native' population and in the establishment have a dearth of knowledge/understanding about Islam.
2. 'Native' Swedes are suspicious towards Islam.
3. The media has been instrumental in portraying Islam as a 'dangerous' religion.
4. Religion plays a big role in Somali way of life.
5. There is a 'clash' between secular Sweden and ['religious'] Somalis?
6. The veil attracts frowns and is viewed with derision by many people in Sweden.

Culture and Religion Revisited:

1. In your opinion is there a clear-cut demarcation between the religion Somalis practice (Islam) and their culture?
2. Do you believe Somali culture is a 'problematic' to their socio-economic integration in Sweden?
3. Do you believe Islam (the religion most Somalis subscribe to) is 'problematic' to their socio-economic integration in Sweden?

Gender Roles/Patterns:

1. 'Patriarchy' among Somalis is contentious to 'native' Swedes.
2. Gender equality in Sweden presents both challenges and opportunities for Somalis in Sweden.

3. The welfare state has displaced the role (position, status, etc) of Somali men and empowered Somali women.

Youths:

1. Somali youths have 'lesser cultural baggage' than their parents.
2. What is your opinion about the following perceptions regarding Somali youths:
 - the prevalence of adolescent delinquencies/criminality
 - the rate and magnitude of joblessness
 - the rate of truancy and school drop-out
 - their lack of role models
 - they oscillate between Somali and Swedish cultures, hence, 'confused' by the two diabolically opposed forces/demands

Swedish Media:

1. The Swedish media is biased towards Somalis.
2. The media focus on negative aspects, e.g., drugs, crimes, etc, when it comes to its dealings with/ reporting on issues regarding immigrants (including Somalis) in Sweden. Comment

MISCELLANEOUS

Smaller or Medium-Sized Towns/Cities:

1. It is better for Somalis to start their first few years of residency in Sweden from smaller or medium-sized towns/cities as opposed to larger metropolitans like Stockholm, Malmö and Göteborg, from an integration perspective,

Somali Ethnic Organisations:

1. What is your assessment of Somali ethnic organisations?

2. Do you think Somali ethnic organisations play an important role in facilitating the integration of their members?

Somali Families:

1. Many Somali families are extraordinarily large in Swedish standards. The host community regard these families as being abnormal in Sweden. What kind of problems would you normally associated with these families?

Khat [a stimulant drug chewed by Somalis]:

1. Do you think that the usage or misuse/abuse of Khat has a negative impact on the image of Somalis (especially Somali men) in Sweden? If yes, in what ways?

Knowledge about Somalis:

1. There is lack of knowledge about Somalis by officials, employers and in the general population. Do you agree?
2. What should society do about this lack of knowledge?

End of Interview

Appendix 18

Interview Schedule III (employed in the Focus Group Interview)

Focus Group Interview:

Venue: Rinkeby (Stockholm)

Date: 06/10/07

Introduction

The session was opened by the researcher with a brief introduction about the aims and purposes of the research. Participation was voluntary. Confidentiality was assured. The researcher extended his gratitude to the participation.

Discussion Topics

General:

1. Somalis and their 'problems' 'stick out' from the rest of immigrants in Sweden.

Multiculturalism:

1. Is Swedish Multiculturalism a 'vision' or 'reality'?

Prompt: Swedish multiculturalism is based on diversity (ethnic, cultural and religious diversity)? Whether the following existed:

- mutual respect
- tolerance
- everyone takes an active and responsible part in society (irrespective of background)
- Are we there yet? How far are we from that goal?
- Will we ever reach there?

Integration Policy:

1. What can you say about the efficacy of Swedish Integration Policy in relation to Somalis?

Education and Work:

1. What can you say on the lack of/inadequacy by Somalis in the following:
 - Swedish language competence (command or proficiency).
 - Education.
 - Appropriate work skills/experiences.
2. There is (widespread) prevalence of illiteracy.
3. There is a widespread long-term unemployment among Somalis in Sweden. Why?
4. Long-term unemployment among Somalis impacts adversely on their reputation/image in Sweden.
5. Is there an improvement in the labour market situation for Somalis in recent years.

Housing:

1. The concentration of Somalis in a few segregated suburbs is 'problematic' to their integration.
2. Would you recommend a 'spread' (i.e., for Somalis to move to other 'less' segregated suburbs)?
3. If so, how could that be achieved?

'Native' Connectivity/Interaction:

1. There is 'little' interaction between Somalis and 'native' Swedes.

2. Somalis need informal contacts with ‘native’ Swedes.
3. In what way can we establish/encourage such contacts between Somalis and ‘native’ Swedes?

Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism:

1. What are your opinions about the prevalence of these phenomena in society?
2. Are Somalis particularly afflicted by these phenomena?
3. How does discrimination impacts on the integration of Somalis in Sweden?
4. What can you say about the efficacy of Swedish anti-discrimination laws/policies?

Culture & Religion:

1. Somali culture deviates excessively from Swedish culture.
2. Is Somali culture an obstacle to their integration in Sweden?
3. Clanism is ‘problematic’ to the integration of Somalis in Sweden.
4. Many in the host society have prejudices against Islam and Muslims.
5. Religion plays a big role in Somali way of life.
6. Does this clash with Sweden ‘secularism’.

Gender Role/Patterns:

1. Somalis lag behind when it comes to gender equality
2. Somali women as less integrated than their male (Somali) counterpart

End of Session.